Tamil TIMES

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"I do not agree with a word of what you say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it."

– Voltaire

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A DECADE OF CONTINUING CONFLICT

It is ten years since Sri Lanka was rocked by an outburst of unprecedented violence and the island's Tamil community went through its most tragic and traumatic experience. To characterise the massacre, pillage and arson directed at the Tamil people of Sri Lanka in July 1983 as a 'race-riot' is a misnomer. It was not a case of the Sinhala majority and the Tamil minority fighting it out with each other, with the government and state law enforcement agencies playing an independent role in an effort to restore law and order and protect the victims and apprehending the perpetrators of the violence. Instead what happened 'was a series of deliberate acts, executed with a concerted plan, conceived and organised well in advance'. (Report of the International Commission of Jurists, March 1984, p.76). It was violence of pogromatic proportions in which sections of the ruling party including some cabinet ministers, the army and the police encouraged, aided, abetted, and in many instances actively participated.

In the orgy of violence that engulfed the Tamils, the most gruesome act of criminality was enacted within the walls of the high security Welikade prison in Colombo when 52 Tamil prisoners held under the infamous Prevention of Terrorism Act were hacked and clubbed to death within their cells on 25 and 27 July 1983. Although the government claimed that the victims were massacred by fellow Sinhala prisoners, some of those who escaped have asserted that the attacks were carried out by prisoners convicted on murder, rape and burglary handpicked by prison warders under the supervision of the deputy jail superintendent aided and abetted by the army and security guards.

The fact that the government failed to appoint an impartial commission to inquire into the July 1983 violence and the prison massacres with a view to identifying and punishing those who conspired, masterminded and carried them out demonstrated its total lack of concern for a people in respect of whom they have the effrontery to claim power to rule and from whom they demand allegiance. The horrors of July 1983 and the government's demonstrable lack of concern for the affected people made even those among the Tamil community who had previously been sceptical about the idea of a separate state to think and act more seriously about its prospects.

The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, once regarded as a purely domestic problem, soon became a regional and an international issue after the violent events of July 1983 with tens of thousands of Tamils landing in foreign lands seeking refuge and security. The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and the suffering inflicted upon the people by the government with its continuing military operations became topics for discussion and criticism of the Sri Lankan government in foreign capitals, parliaments and international fora. Year after year, at the United Nations Commission on Human rights and other international conferences, there were denunciations of Sri Lanka's record of gross human rights violations.

With the enactment of the sixth amendment to the constitution which required Members of Parliament to forswear the advocacy of a separate state, the TULF MPs who refused to take the required oath were literally ousted from Parliament. Progressively the TULF became sidelined as the Tamil militant groups grew in strength and numbers after July 1983 with large numbers of youth flocking to join them. With bases, offices and training facilities provided in India, and the government there adopting a supportive attitude towards the Tamil cause, the Tamil militant groups began to determine the course of Tamil politics and the plight of the people. One of the debilitating factors has been the intense rivalry and internecine armed conflicts among the Tamil militant groups which sought to act independently of each other. Among the militant groups, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), widely believed to be the most regimented and organised, regarded and asserted itself as the sole representative of the entire Tamil people thus denying any role for any other group or party. In seeking to achieve the status of the 'sole representative', the Tigers succeeded in physically liquidating most of the cadres and leaders of other groups and driving out the rest from the Tamil areas. Even the leaders of the unarmed TULF were gunned down.

Even before the Tamil people had recovered from the fate that befell them in July 1983, the Sri Lankan government began a sustained campaign of military operations in the northeast. In the period between 1984 and 1986, thousands of Tamil youth were rounded up, transported to detention camps in the

Continued from page 3

south of the island where many of them were subjected to torture and inhuman treatment. In sustained military operations in the north and east during the same period, thousands of properties and sometimes whole villages were destroyed. Tens of thousands have been killed or maimed for life.

The peace moves initiated by India failed one after another as the conflict continued. Beginning with the 'Annexure C' proposals authored by G. Parthasarathy in late 1983, the All Party Conference which commenced in January 1984 and ended ingloriously in October 1984, the failed negotiations at Thimpu in Bhutan in the middle of 1985 to the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 1987, the Indian government had been making continuing efforts to bring about a resolution of the conflict without success.

After the failure of the Thimpu talks, the Sri Lankan government sought to impose a military solution by escalating military operations throughout 1986, and by the beginning of 1987 was seeking to overrun the Jaffna peninsula with its 'Operation Liberation'. It was at this time that India, having warned Sri Lanka that it would not permit a military defeat upon the Tamils, flexed its muscle with its own 'Operation Poomalai' when Indian transport planes accompanied by Mirage fighters dropped 'humanitarian aid' into Jaffna. This was soon followed by the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement.

Many hoped that the Agreement providing for devolution of power to a merged Northeast Provincial Council would have offered an opportunity for settling the conflict. The presence of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) also gave the people of the Northeast, who had suffered enormously at the hands of the Sri Lankan security forces, a sense of security and reassurance. However, the expectations of peace and the feeling of reassurance were soon to be shattered with the outbreak of confrontation between the IPKF and the Tamil Tigers in October 1987. During this confrontation that lasted until December 1989, the people were subjected to untold atrocities by the IPKF with massive loss of lives and destruction of property particularly in the northern areas. There were those among the Tamil community who garlanded and welcomed the IPKF on its arrival but were glad to see them depart in March 1990.

Then expectations were raised among the people when the LTTE commenced negotiations with President Premadasa in April 1989. After fourteen months of negotiation, and the LTTE having obtained virtual territorial control of the Northeast, and within three months of the departure of the IPKF, fighting broke out in June 1990 between government forces and the LTTE which developed into a total war engulfing the entirety of the northeast. This war, described as Eelam War II, has continued for over three years without any sign of an end. It has resulted in more lives lost and more properties destroyed than at any time in the past. The LTTE has withdrawn from the towns in the east in advance of the Sri Lankan Army moving in, and the people have been left to the mercy of the security forces. As the Tigers mount occasional ambush attacks on the security forces, people are subjected to retaliatory attacks, and search and destroy operations. An estimated 3,000 persons have 'disappeared' in the eastern province since June 1990.

The northern Jaffna peninsula has been subjected to a virtual economic blockade with the prohibition of transport of many items essential to the survival of the community. The only lifeline is the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) through whose good offices, the government despatches only a fraction of the needs of the population. There is no safe passage for people to and from Jaffna to the mainland. The army refuses to open up the Sangupiddy-Pooneryn causeway unless they are given the power to check people and goods at the crossing point to which the LTTE does not agree. The LTTE refuses to allow civilians to use the Elephant Pass 'for military reasons'. the only point at which people are crossing is the Kilali lagoon, which has been declared a 'prohibited zone' under emergency regulations, and many people have been killed by the security forces as they seek to cross.

The attacks and mass killings of Tamil speaking Muslims in the eastern province attributed to the LTTE, apparently in retaliation to the Muslim homeguards collaborating with the army, and the forcible driving out of nearly 50,000 Muslim families from Jaffna and other northern areas constitute another cruel development in the course of Eelam War II. This would appear to have alienated substantial sections of Muslim opinion away from the demand for a merged northeast province to constitute a single territorial unit, thus strengthening the hand of those forces in south Sri Lanka which are campaigning for a delinking of the northeast achieved under the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement.

In the aftermath of July 1983 and succeeding years, there was tremendous international sympathy and support for the Tamil cause, if not for the idea of separatism. Indian support remained solid. The sad fact today is that support and sympathy once available in good measure would appear to have been wantonly dissipated.

Whatever faint hopes people had about the Parliamentary Select Committee on the ethnic issue coming up with a solution to the conflict have disappeared now. The government and the Tigers are locked into a war for which there is no end in sight. The tragic prospect at the end of this decade of continuing conflict and never-ending suffering for the people is that it is set to enter into the second decade.

Moves Towards 'National Govt. as SLFP Suspends Anura

The main opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party is in grave crisis over the suspension of its leading figures, Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, who was issued with a letter suspending him from membership of the party by its General Secretary on the direction of Anura's mother and leader of the party, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike.

Reports of a coalition between the ruling United National Party and the Democratic United National Front led by Gamini Dissanayake circulating already have assumed wider significance with reports that moves are afoot to form a 'National Government' with a combination of the UNP, DUNF, the Anura faction of the SLFP and the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress. Anura is reported to have the support of nearly 30 to 35 MPs out of 64 in the SLFP parliamentary party.

Knowledgeable sources seem to be confident that the man behind this prospective 'grand alliance' forming 'National Government' is none other than that wily old political fox, the former President J.R. Jayewardene.

Anura's faction is said to contain an amorphous group of right-wing MPs and those who once belonged to the chauvinist *Hela Urumaya* faction together with those who are dissatisfied with Mrs. Bandaranaike's leadership and the important role she had allowed in the party to her daughter and Western Provincial Council Chief Minister, Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike.

Anura has been waging a battle over the expulsion of Tilaka Karunaratne, MP, a key leader of the *Hela Urumaya* and an ally of Anura, from the SLFP, the charge being that he had called for the stepping down of Mrs. B from the leadership of the party. Mr. Karunaratne's expulsion is being presently challenged in the courts, and Anura was expected to support him.

Anura's suspension has been precipitated by his recent statements in interviews he had given to newspapers in which he had made critical remarks about the state of the party leadership, the unfairness of the expulsion of Mr. Karunaratne and also about the role of his sister, Chandrika, who is reported to have claimed in interviews to foreign correspondents that if she was given the party leadership for three months, she could turn it around into better shape. When asked about this reported claim by Chandrika, Anura replied that Chandrika had been in three political parties, and split and wrecked them all. If she couldn't turn those parties around, he could not think that she could turn the SLFP around. Just because she had won the Gampaha district and formed an administration in the Western Provincial Council thanks to the support from the DUNF, he did not see why she assumed that she could turn around the SLFP into better shape. 'What she says is also a vote of no confidence on the leader of the SLFP. She had said that the leader of the SLFP is incompetent, which nobody else has said, except Tilak Karunaratne who got sacked for saying it. What action are they going to take against Mrs. Kumaranatunga? She is saying the same thing that Tilak said in other words. Tilak Karunaratne was sacked because he was not a Bandaranaike. What is the discipline in a party that sacks any other but not a Bandaranaike. . .I don't think she (Chandrika) has the capacity or the ability to turn the SLFP or anything around. She has wrecked three parties.

No sooner than his suspension became public, several SLFP MPs, numbering over 20, visited Anura at his Rosmead Place residence which adjoins the residences of both Mrs. B and Chandrika. The significance of the visit by the DUNF leaders, Gamini Dissanayake and G.M. Premachandra did not go unnoticed.

In the meantime, the government has decided to support a motion moved by Dr. Neville Fernando, an SLFP MP and an Anura supporter to amend the Constitutional provision which prohibits Members of Parliament from crossing from one party to another, and the power given to political parties to deprive MPs of their seats on disciplinary grounds and to appoint other persons in their place. This 'anti-defection' provision was introduced by the former President Jayawardene, who had obtained a four-fifths majority in Parliament in the 1977 elections, to prevent UNP MPs from crossing over.

The tactic of the government, which does not have two thirds majority in the House, in supporting such a motion is to enable it to wean away opposition MPs, mainly from the SLFP, so that it may be in a position to make such amendments as it thinks necessary to the Constitution. As this 'anti-defection' provision affects Provincial Councils too, the approval of Dr. Fernando's motion would also enable the UNP to regain overall control of the three Provinces, Western, North Central and Southern, by weaning away DUNF Provincial Councillors to defect towards the UNP.

It is reported that Mr. Bandaranaike, and his *Hela Urumaya* group are canvassing hard among parliamentarians to muster 151 votes for the amendment which is a two-third majority in the 225 member Parliament.

Meanwhile President of the DUNF, Mr. A.C. Gooneratne, PC, yesterday told reporters that it was now time for all parties to co-operate on national issues. We feel that all parties should get together to provide a solution to all the problems facing the country. He said that President D.B. Wijetunga had invited the DUNF Leader, Gamini Dissanayake, for talks where what help the DUNF could give the Government on national issues was discussed. Following these talks, the UNP Working Committee had authorised the President to have talks with leaders of parties. The politburo of the DUNF had meanwhile authorised Mr. Gamini Dissanayake to have discussions with the President and report to the DUNF Working Committee on any proposals made by President Wijetunga.

Mr. Gooneratne, said that for the DUNF to join the Government, one of two things must happen – either some UNP Nominated List MPs should resign to make way for the appointment of DUNFers – or a General Election held with the DUNF and the UNP in a joint campaign.

Mr. Gooneratne added that he was of the view that the Government should invite other parties too and have discussions with them with a view to forming a National Government. This was necessary to tackle issues like bribery, corruption, economic problems and the North-East war.

Chandrika has become so irreconcilable that a split in the SLFP is inevitable. The SLFP has been out of power for the last seventeen years, and during the greater part of this period the party has been beset by internecine conflict at leadership level. If the anticipated split occurs, the prospects for the SLFP are bleak, and the party built by the late Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike would have been effectively destroyed by his family inheritors.

Govt.--LTTE Deal on Release of POWs Collapses

Captives Again Threaten Fast-to-Death

The government of Sri Lanka is caught up in a human drama that has developed into a major embarrassment over the issue of the release of the 32 remaining policemen who are in LTTE captivity in Jaffna since June 1990. Following talks with government's emissary, Brigadier Ananda Wijesekera, the Tigers released five of the prisoners, and one more was released later due to illness. Now the 32 remaining captives whom the LTTE has refused to release until the government accedes to their demands have threatened a fast-unto death for a second time.

The saga started when parents and relatives of the captives began receiving letters that the prisoners would commence on 13 June, the third anniversary of their capture, a fast-unto-death until they were released. Although some Colombo-based newspapers dubbed the prisoners' move as LTTE-inspired, the worried parents and relatives approached the ICRC seeking their intervention to prevent the fast. They also made representations to religious dignitaries in the south and to the government threatening that they themselves would launch a fast for the release of their captured sons. Sensing the potential for trouble in the developing situation, President Wijetunga summoned the Jaffna Government Agent Mr. K. Manikkavasagar to Colombo and had discussions with him on 18 June.

Negotiations between the ICRC and the LTTE resulted in the latter agreeing to a family reunion of the captives and their relatives. Each prisoner was to be allowed to be seen by two of his nearest kith and kin. Originally, it was intended to be a one-day visit. On 19 June, seventy-eight relatives and three officials of the ICRC travelled to Jaffna by ship to Point Pedro from where they were taken overland to Jaffna.

It is reported that the LTTE received the relatives with lavish hospitality which no doubt pleased the visitors. A Colombo newspaper, quoted a relative of a released policeman as saying: 'Will even our people in the south look after us in the way the boys of Jaffna did? When we reminded the boys that the only thing we knew of Jaffna was the *karuththakolumban* mangoes, the next day a basketful arrived. When we said we were thirsty, they brought us bunches of *thambili*. They spoke to us nicely and said that their problem was not with us, but with the Government.' That was one up for the LTTE which sought to impress upon the relatives that the responsibility for the continued captivity of the policemen was the government's lack of concern in their release.

The meeting between them and the prisoners was characterised by highly emotional scenes as the relatives hugged and kissed their loved ones whom they had not seen for over three years. some of the relatives asserted that they would not return until the prisoners were released, and some even pledged that they themselves would launch a fast.

Previous negotiations between the LTTE and the government through the ICRC had centred on the question of the release of some 60 or so Tiger cadres in government custody in return for the 38 policemen and one army man in LTTE custody. It is reliably learnt that the government and even the army was not averse to such a deal. Sources which understand the mindset of the Tiger leadership believe that the government's hopes for such a deal had previously failed because the LTTE did not place much reliance or significance upon their cadres who get captured by the 'enemy' and violate the rule to bite the cyanide capsule.

Now the LTTE was prepared to release all the prisoners unconditionally provided a government emissary visited Jaffna to meet the Tigers and take charge of released men, and that was what they told the ICRC. A fax message to this effect from the ICRC conveying the LTTE request was received in the President's office.

In spite of several reported instances of behind-the-scene indirect contact between late President Premadasa and the LTTE, since June 1990 when Eelam War II began, the government had no official direct talks with the Tigers. With 72 emotionally charged relatives of the prisoners in Jaffna refusing to leave until they were released, the government was forced to relent from its entrenched hard position of not talking to the Tigers. It was then that Brigadier Ananda Weerasekara, the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation, was despatched to Jaffna along with the Jaffna Government Agent to represent the government. They flew to Jaffna on 18 June. The Brigader was put up at the Subash Hotel in Jaffna where the LTTE's Anton Balasingham, Karikalan and Thamil Chelvam met him for talks.

During the talks, the Tiger representatives are reported to have raised the question of lifting the ban on the transport to Jaffna of certain essential items such as batteries, bicycles, fuel, coconut oil, radios, school stationery, fertilizer and medicine in return for the release of the prisoners, and told him that the information given to the government by the ICRC that the prisoners were going to be released unconditionally was a 'mistake in translation'. The Brigadier who went to Jaffna only with the intention of taking charge of the released prisoners and to make arrangements for their return and that of their relatives, relayed back the LTTE request to Colombo. After huddled consultations at senior level, the Brigadier was summoned back to Colombo on 20 June where he spelt out the Tigers demands for the release of the prisoners.

The Tigers had cornered the government into a difficult situation. Refusal or even reluctance on the part of the government would have without doubt led to the belief that the government was not interested in seeking the release of the prisoners. It would have had to face the wrath of the relatives who continued to remain in Jaffna. The government caved in based upon the belief that the lift on the ban on the transport of certain items and making arrangements for the despatch of those items would be a one-off deal, and once all the prisoners were released, the LTTE would have no more cards to play to make further demands. This belief on the part of the government discounts the possibility of more prisoners in LTTE captivity – it must be remembered that the LTTE forced approximately a thousand policemen to surrender at the commencement of Eelam War II out of whom the whereabouts of a substantial number still remains unaccounted.

Brig. Weerasekera returned to Jaffna on 21 June with a reply to the LTTE on a headed notepaper of the Joint Operations Command (JOC) and signed by the JOC chief Hamilton Wanasinghe, and informed the LTTE of the government's response which was that the government had virtually agreed to the LTTE's demand to allow the transport of the items demanded by them, but told the LTTE representatives that the quantity of some of

the items would have to be determined by the Government Agent of Jaffna. The LTTE responded by releasing only five policemen, who were described as very poorly healthwise, and reportedly promised to release the rest on confirmation being received from the GA that the goods they asked for were on their way.

The nine-day fast of the prisoners ended on June 21 with them drinking *thambili* water given to them by the LTTE.

The Government Agent and Brig. Weerasekera flew back to Colombo with the five hostages and their relatives on 22 June. Consequent to the discussions the Government Agent had in Colombo, 15 lorries loaded with 500 barrels of petrol, and the ship M.V Ruhuna with 100 barrels of engine oil, 200 barrels of coconut oil, 1500 barrels of kerosene, 500 barrels of diesel, 50 metric tons of urea fertilizer, 100,000 boxes of matches, 50,000 exercise books and 500 bicycles were despatched to Jaffna. The government also issued a gazette notification deleting from the previously banned list some items such as transistor radios, torchlight batteries and medicines.

The Government Agent of Jaffna, Mr. Manikkavasar told newsmen on 23 June that the rest of the 34 policemen in LTTE custody were no longer prisoners, but they were at Subash Hotel, Jaffna, together with their relatives. According to the LTTE, they would be allowed to go from Jaffna after the government had fulfilled their demands.

Brig. Weerasekera, accompanied by Mr. Manikkavasagar, again flew to Jaffna on 25 June with a view to negotiating with the LTTE for the release of the 34 prisoners. But the negotiations have become stalled. It is reported that the LTTE has renewed its demands that the government should lift its embargo on the transport of several essential items, through normal channels including private traders and that it should allow free flow of goods to Jaffna instead of the previously agreed set quantities as determined by the Government Agent.

The military appears to be totally opposed to the idea of conceding to the LTTE demand for the lifting of the embargo and the free flow of goods on alleged two grounds – firstly that some of the banned items like petrol, diesel and batteries would enhance the fighting capabilities of the Tigers, and secondly the LTTE's methods of imposing taxes on all goods distributed into Jaffna would help it amass vast sums of money to augment their war effort. A JOC spokesman claimed that LTTE was seeking to use the problem of the prisoners and the presence of their relatives in Jaffna to achieve military advantage.

On 30 June, one more prisoner, a policeman, was freed from custody by the LTTE as he was very ill, and he and eight of the relatives were flown to Colombo. 32 prisoners and their relatives still remain in Jaffna.

Since the breakdown of talks, the ships carrying goods to Jaffna have been diverted from Point Pedro to the army-controlled port of Kankesanthurai. Brig. Weerasekera and the Jaffna GA returned to Colombo on 28 June. Government sources assert that it is the responsibility of the ICRC, which arranged for the relatives of the prisoners to go to Jaffna and remained there in anticipation of their release, to bring them back. The ICRC seems to have been put in an embarrassing position.

Forces of Militarism Scuttle Moves Towards Peace

(by our Special Correspondent, Colombo)

July 1993 is a month that is bound to evoke bitter memories among Tamils in Sri Lanka and the diaspora. Very little has been done to soothe or heal the bloody wounds inflicted on the Tamils ten years ago this month. Instead, a decade of merciless war has cast a grim pall over the hopes of the people.

Tamil political analysts who are being asked by liberal minded journals in the south to comment on the ethnic question to mark the passage of a decade since the ugly events of July '83 that tore apart Sri Lanka's ethnic fabric, find it extremely difficult to strike a positive note. When the question of referendum to split the North-east Province came up, the attitude of Sinhala politicians and a section of the so-called 'national' press gave no cause for optimism on the eve of July 1993. The reaction of the military rank and file, reflected in and supported by the writings and speeches of Sinhala nationalists, when the possibility of negotiations became a reality for the first time since Eelam War Two began with Brigadier Ananda Weerasekera's recent visit to Jaffna, further disheartened the Tamils.

The eagerness with which many Sinhala politicians and opinion makers embraced the cause of prising the east from the north was particularly significant at this juncture, for it was the anti-Tamil violence of July '83 that conclusively showed many Tamils that they had no other place in the island where they could feel safe except the northeast. This is why they had, in the years which followed, supported the moderates who sought constitutional recognition for the territorial unity of the northeast and tolerated the armed insurrection of the militants who waged war on the Sri Lankan state to make their homeland a sovereign nation. The army for its part rushed to assure the Chairman of the PSC, that it would create the 'appropriate' conditions in the east for holding the referendum, even before anyone was sure whether the Select Committee had taken a clear decision on the matter. The 'national' press which had given publicity to the army's eagerness to divide the northeast, preferred later to ignore or play down Dinesh Gunawardene's revelation in parliament that the PSC had not come to any decision on the referendum.

It was therefore apparent that the stance of the security forces, the majority of the Sinhala politicians, the Buddhist clergy and a section of the so-called 'national' press in acting even against those Tamil aspirations which fall well within the constitutional parameters of the unitary state, was as strong and ideologically compelling as it was in 1983. And every head of government is acutely aware that the applause of this powerful alliance within the Sinhala polity is reserved only for the leader who indulges its passions and promotes its interests. The enlightened Sinhala politician may also discover in due course that it is prudent to yield his better judgement to the dictates of 'Sinhala Buddhist militarism', than stand discredited among his people. The conduct of the Chairman of the Parliamentary Select Committee, Mr. Mangala Moonasinghe, an otherwise amiable, decent and reasonable person, is a recent case in point. Today it appears more than ever that the political leadership in the south has very little power to overrule or at least influence the 'Sinhala Buddhist militarists' in the long term interests and geo-political concerns of the country.

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The post-Premadasa administration depends as much as its predecessors did, on the annual development and structural adjustment aid granted by the western donor community. Although the aid group has not extended its assistance sparingly in its yearly financial pledge made to the Sri Lankan government, its member countries have quietly but firmly and consistently made it clear that Colombo should bring to size the budget deficit – GNP ratio. This in non-technical terms means that the government cannot divert much western funding into defence expenditure. Therefore, while having successfully secured more aid than what was given last year, the government has to be mindful of the fact that it has to bring about at least a temporary peace to consolidate the necessary measures for decreasing the inflationary pressures on the economy.

Not only the western donors but the local business community as well was bringing indirect and direct pressure in varying degrees on the government to ease the burden caused by the disproportionately huge defence budget. The Tea Traders' Association told the Prime Minister who attended a conference organised by it recently that the Association welcomed his peace initiative in calling Prabhaharan for direct talks with the government in view of the fact that 'twenty cents of each rupee in the budget was being spent on the war'. The UNP regime by its very nature finds it difficult to resist the power of the combined influence of the donor countries and the local business community.

The UNP leadership from the latter part of 1987 has shown an inclination to strike a delicate balance between its Sinhala Buddhist majoritarian ideology and the secular concerns of development and fiscal discipline which on the ethnic question run counter to the interests and consequences of that ideology. The balance of course has on every occasion ultimately tilted in favour of the former. Yet the inclination or compulsion is still discernible mainly due to external circumstances.

Hence, the UNP leadership adopted an exceptionally conciliatory posture towards making peace with the LTTE on the eve of the annual Aid Group meeting which it had to face in Paris, and quietly explored the possibility of opening up a line of communication with the Tiger high command when the opportunity presented itself in the form of securing the release of the security forces personnel held in Jaffna. On his second visit the amicable Brigadier Ananda Weerasekera was clearly 'given to understand' that an informal indication should be given to the LTTE that the negotiations to get the prisoners released could lead to negotiations aimed at bringing the conflict to an end.

The LTTE had also been sending messages, through European NGO channels, which emphasised the need to have an official emissary of the Sri Lankan government to sort out issues such as the opening of the Sanguppiddy causeway linking Jaffna to the mainland, exchange of prisoners etc., The LTTE, it appears, was keen on this from early June when it had enough reason to believe that a section of the Sri Lankan political-military elite might successfully seek Indian assistance to make a decisive strike on the peninsula. Brigadier Weerasekera's visit, therefore, was made at the appropriate juncture where both sides were desirous, for their own reason, to dialogue and if possible secure a temporary peace. Despite the ulterior motives of the parties, this was considered by many Tamils as a welcome move in view of the enormous hardships endured by the Tamils living in the north in general and those in the peninsula in particular. The large number of Tamils who had taken up residence in Colombo since Eelam War Two began also heaved a sigh of relief in view of the indiscriminate action of the police directed at them since the first week of June which simply amounted to a poorly disguised campaign of racial persecution.

The Tamils in the north eagerly awaited the partial lifting of the embargo while those in Colombo expected that their troubles would ease a little. The government came to an agreement with the LTTE that the ban on some items to the north would be lifted in return for th policemen and soldiers in Tiger custody; and that the removal of the ban would be duly gazetted to ensure the regular supply of the specified items to the north. Following the formal announcement, one of the main items in the banned list – bicycles and spare parts – were transported in considerable quantity by the northerners through the checkpoint at Vavuniya to the dismay and dislike of the local military and the Tamil group, PLOTE, which is collaborating with the army in the area.

Meanwhile, it became quite apparent that the frontline commanders were up in arms against the Joint Operations Command (JOC), which had been responsible for working together with the government in concluding the deal on the POWs through Brig. Weeraskera. The army commander Lt. Gen. Cecil Widyaratne, who had an axe to grind against the JOC and its chief Gen. Hamilton Wanasinghe, seems to have lost no time in exploiting the situation to his advantage. The JOC chief had to face the ire of the frontline commanders as a consequence, with some of them telling him that they would not be in a position to fight the Tigers again if the government were to go ahead with the partial lifting of the embargo. Maj. Gen. Lucky Algama who is being groomed by the army chief Widyaratne to succeed him as Army Commander, intensified operations against the Tigers in the east.

On the third day of the partial lifting of the ban, the army prevented civilians from taking bicycle spareparts to the north at the Vavuniya 'border' checkpoint. The decision to do this had been taken apparently without the knowledge of the JOC and the government in Colombo. When Brig. Weerasekera went to Jaffna to bring back the security forces personnel and their families, the Tigers informed him that the army was acting contrary to the agreement by reimposing the ban on certain items specified in the gazette notification issued by the government. They, hence, wanted the government to make specific arrangements for the supply of those items through Kachcheri officials and department heads in Jaffna. And until then the POWs had to remain in Jaffna. Even before the government and the JOC could pause to reconsider the situation, the army promptly cried foul at the LTTE saying that it had reneged on its promises and reimposed the ban fully. Thousands of civilians who had rushed to buy bicycles, exercise books for school children, boxes of matches etc., were stopped from taking their goods to the north at the military checkpoint in Vavuniya. The JOC and the government had little option in the face of the army's belligerence and the unconcealed hostility of the 'national' press but to fall in line. Some army officials did not fail to accuse the ICRC of perfidy.

The untrammelled discretion of civilian authority is clearly a myth in Sri Lanka when it comes to making an important decision on the national question. The exigencies of the army in defeating the Tiger is one thing but refusing to submit or yield to the priorities of a democratically constituted civilian government is another, which puts in question the possibility of finding a political space at all for settling the ethnic conflict. An apparently annoyed moderate Tamil

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Referendum Proposal in the East Denounced

'A Move to Escalate Ethnic Tension' – Thondaman

Cabinet Minister and leader of the Ceylon Workers Congress, Mr. S. Thondaman has declared his opposition to the proposal to hold a referendum in the eastern province at this juncture on the issue whether the Northeast Province should remain merged as a single Province.

He said that the referendum proposal was 'a subtle move by some people to aggravate communal tension in the country'. He pointed out that although a referendum to decide on the merger was part of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, it was put off for the past five years. If it was an easy thing to hold a referendum it would have been done long ago. He doubted whether the referendum would be a solution to the ethnic conflict, but it probably would make it worse.

Mr. Thondaman suggested that a referendum in the Eastern Province could be held 10 years later after the completion of two parliamentary elections. 'After the assassination of President Premadasa and Lalith Athulathmudali, the country had remained calm and peaceful, although some people had predicted riots. Some people are making an effort to create communal tensions and troubles by trying to hold a referendum at this time,' the Minister alleged.

The CWC leader said that his party would not attend the meetings of the Parliamentary Select Committee on the ethnic question. He had sent a reply to the recent invitation from its Chairman explaining why he could not accept the invitation or could not attend its sittings.

In his letter dated 7 June to the PSC, Mr. Thondaman stated: 'From the first sitting of the Committee to now, a period of 19 months has lapsed. Even though 43 sittings were held and 253 memoranda were examined, a way out of the ethnic impasse has not been found. I regret to note that this grave national question has not been approached either with a sense of urgency or in a spirit of earnestness. Valuable lives have been needlessly lost.

'The CWC is unable to convince itself that its proposals had received either the consideration they deserved or the study they merited. The viability of the proposals proferred by the CWC are in no way detracted by the lapse of time.

'Will Create Permanent Discord' – Ashraff

'The results of the proposed referendum to decide on the Northeast merger is bound to create permanent discord and mistrust among all communities in Sri Lanka, and it is advisable that political leaders pay attention to this, Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader and Member of Parliament for Digamadulla Mr. M.H. Ashraff said when asked about his party's position on the proposal to hold a referendum in the Eastern Province.

The SLMC had always maintained that if the merger of the North and East could have been brought about by the stroke of a pen under emergency powers, the same method could be exercised for the demerger process. The SLMC was of the view that the Northeast conflict had to be resolved without the process of a referendum, Mr. Ashraff said.

'A multi-party consensus has to be reached at any cost and should be implemented. We can understand the Parliamentary Select Committee's disregard for the LTTE viewpoint. But it is difficult to understand how the Committee could completely ignore the aspirations of the non-LTTE groups.' It was unfortunate that the decision to hold a referendum had not taken into consideration various viewpoints of the Muslim and Tamil parties, Mr. Ashraff added.

He said that the reported latest decision of the Select Committee was a contradiction of the earlier interim report submitted by the Chairman of

Referendum Story – True or False?

All the mainstream Colombo newspapers reported that the Parliamentary Select Committee had decided at its last meeting to hold a referendum in the Eastern Province within three months. These papers not only came out with editorial comments on the reported decision, but also encouraged the publication of articles and commentaries on the pros and cons of the proposal.

However, the important question is whether the PSC in fact made that decision as reported. Mr. Dinesh Gunawardene, the leader of the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna and a member of the PSC, speaking in Parliament recently denied that the Committee had reached such a decision. 'The Select Committee never took a decision to hold a referendum at the last meeting. The minutes of the meeting do not say that. Some elements had misled the newspaper reporters to gain cheap popularity. Two newspapers carried the story about the referendum. Parliament, Secretary-General or the Select Committee Chairman did not take action to correct this wrong news item. According to the minutes, the Committee discussed the possibility of holding a referendum and decided to invite certain officials to the next meeting to obtain their views on the matter. The Committee Chairman told me that he did not release the story. Some members of the Committee may have done this. An attempt was being made to create a situation unnecessarily. I have given a protest note to the Speaker about this issue,' Mr. Gunawardene told Parliament.

The MPs belonging to the LSSP and CP who are members of the Select Committee too have protested to the Chairman about the failure to correct the misleading reports in the press about the so-called decision to hold the referendum in the east.

Discerning political analysts in Colombo believe that there are some members of the Select Committee who want to push the Chairman, Mr. Mangala Moonesinghe, along the referendum path, and it is with their contacts in the Colombo newspapers who caused the publication of this distorted report.

the PSC to the Speaker of Parliament, Mr. M.H. Mohamed. 'If the Select Committee is very keen to demerge, without the concurrence of the minority political parties, there is no logic in the committee looking for the consensus of the people that these parties represent', Mr. Ashraff said.

The Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims had been living peacefully; but if the Muslims, who are the deciding factor, vote for the demerger of the North-east, the Tigers would massacre the Muslims mercilessly; if they voted against the demerger, then the Sinhala majority community would misunderstand the Muslims to be condoning the atrocities of the LTTE. Thus it was the case of 'Heads I win, Tails you lose'. The innocent Muslims would be the losers in either case. This was a political trap set for the Muslims of this country. Whether the people vote for or against the demerger, a triangular battle between the Sinhala, Muslim and Tamil communities would develop, and the mere thought of its consequences was terrifying. If ever there was a proposal to hold a referendum, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress would be determined to launch a vehement political campaign against it, Dr. I.M. Illias, North-Western Province District Chairman of the SLMC said addressing a meeting held recently at Puttalam.

Speaking in Parliament recently, SLMC Member of Parliament, Mr. L.A.M. Hisbullah said that by 1990 most of the Muslim families had been driven out from the north by the LTTE. They fled to the Western Province from the north. Since then these Muslims have been living in extreme poverty. They are living in huts and survive on dry rations. The owners of these huts too are not in favour of their living in them. Their health and educational facilities have been adversely affected. But the government had not taken any action to help them, nor have they paid any compensation to the affected Muslim families.

Although some talk to the Muslims about a referendum and of their rights, a recent newspaper report stated that there were one million Muslims entitled to vote, but only 600,000 have been registered to vote. The demerger of the Northeast was not a solution to the ethnic problem. That would not settle the problem of the Muslims driven out of the north. The question of the referendum has today become a joke to some politicians. But it was a matter of life and death to the Muslims in these areas, Mr. Hisbullah added.

Udugampola's Return and the Rule of Law

by Jehan Perera

The implications of former Police DIG Premadasa Udugampola's return to a welcome untrammelled by the open arrest warrant against him have a significance that go far beyond the theoretical considerations of a nation ruled by law. The controversy has arisen at a time when the country is, or should be, undergoing a period of intense soul-searching.

A president of Sri Lanka who strode like a colossus across the national scene was assassinated less than 2 months ago. His physical presence may no longer be evident but his spirit still lingers on. A week earlier the Opposition Leader most likely to have succeeded him was also done away with through an assassination.

Hardly a year has passed since the Navy Commander and Northern Army Commander were likewise assassinated. And, of course, this follows the tens of thousands of political killings that have taken place in the country over the past decade.

In this context, the remaining leadership in the country have every reason to be concerned about overcoming the threat of assassination. They may be the next targets. Whether they can serve the nation under these conditions with minds that are free from a fear of their lives that cripples their humane qualities is certainly open to question.

Not even the LTTE leader, Mr. Vellupillai Prabhakaran, can afford to be complacent, although it is easy to lay the blame for the recent assassinations at his door. Mr. Prabhakaran's readings on history, which range from Clint Eastwood to Mahatma Gandhi, would no doubt have told him that security does not come from bodyguards alone. Indeed, the danger may finally come from them.

The Roman Emperor Gaius Caesar, better known as Caligula, whose reign was marked by increasingly mad self-deification, was assassinated by the head of his own elite Praetorian Guard.

Perhaps, the common element in the two parts of Sri Lanka is the rule of men and not of law. When the rule of law takes second place to the rule of men, the attractiveness of political assassination grows.

If changing the man changes the rule, then getting rid of the man at the top becomes a very tempting proposition. That is why tyrannies and 'one man shows' invariably end in a climate of intrigues and assassinations.

Rule of Law

The notion of the rule of law is an ancient one. Aristotle, in Greece 2,300 years ago said the Rule of Law was better than that of any individual. In the early 1600s, the question before Chief Justice Coke of England was whether the king himself could act as a judge, or whether he must dispense justice through the judges.

Coke stated that the king must be subject to the law 'because the law makes him king.' Perhaps, it is the effort at upholding the Rule of Law that has made the Western countries what they are, and our neglect of it that has made us into an unstable and violence-prone country.

The long dominance of ancient Rome, a city state, whose influence still persists, certainly calls for more than a simple explanation. Roman armies and their conquests offer only a part of the reason. At a deeper level lies the record of state power that was regular and consistent in its application.

From 534 BC to 133 BC during a 400-year period of the Roman Republic (as opposed to the later Roman Empire), there was not a single political assassination of a leading public figure. This was an amazing record for the world at that time, and even now.

Like every other people, the Romans too indulged in quarrels, vendettas and occasional group attacks, especially the stoning of individuals condemned by public opinion for private transgressions. But what made the Roman Republic unique was its respect for public law that concerned the relationship between the state and the citizen.

The public sphere was considered to be beyond the reach of arbitrary and personal manipulation. All Romans, from the rulers down to the Plebians, respected the civil order and established legal procedures.

As a result, the people could see that

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the laws were carried out impartially and predictably. Also it was plain to see that there was not much point in getting a public figure assassinated in order to force a change in governmental policy as the next individual who came in would be constrained to follow the same laws that his predecessor had followed.

The Udugampola Case

Today, above all what Sri Lanka needs may be a return to the Rule of Law Perhaps, there is no better guarantee of an impartial solution, and one that will stick, to the ethnic conflict. The Sinhalese who do not trust the Tamils, and the LTTE which does not trust the Government (and vice versa) can then, instead, trust in the law.

But, unfortunately, by highlighting the erosion in the Rule of Law, the circumstances of Mr. Udugampola's return to the country via the VIP lounge at Katunayake Airport bodes ill for problems that need an impartial solution.

Following his bloody victory over the JVP insurgents, Mr. Udugampola took on Mafia elements with links to official circles and finally the late President Premadasa himself when he claimed to lay bare the source of the 'Black Cat' killer squads and the destruction they had wrought.

For what Mr. Udugampola did to preserve the established order, the government can be grateful. For the sufferings he underwent due to the loss of his family and his job, the government can show compassion. But none of these, or any other, should usurp the Rule of Law. Certainly a political bargain with the government to keep him silent cannot be justified at all.

Law Reduced to an Ass

Unfortunately, the manner of Mr. Udugampola's return made an ass of the law. There was an open warrant for his arrest at the time of his return to the country. Although his return was publicised in advance, there was only his family and the press to meet him on arrival.

Public Concern

The Attorney General, whose officers earnestly filed a plaint against him under the Penal Code for inciting the people against the Government during the period of President Premadasa, is now reported to have said that if Mr. Udugampola decided to withdraw those allegations and apologises, no purpose would be served in pursuing the action.

That cannot be. The Attorney General appears to be taking the view that this case is in the nature of a private quarrel that can be patched up by an apology and withdrawal of insults. The analogy would perhaps be to a person who, in reversing his car, accidentally bumps it into another car. In such a situation the two parties can settle their problems privately with an apology.

But if the person who hits into the other car did so while driving drunk at 80 mph on the wrong side of a public road, they, cannot settle the matter privately. In such a case, the police would have to take this matter to the courts for the nature of the driver's conduct has crossed from the private domain over into the public domain.

The allegations that Police DIG Udugampola made against the Government that resulted in his indictment certainly cannot be considered to be ones regarding a private quarrel that can be settled with an apology.

On the contrary, they are matters concerning the public life of the nation and which allegedly led to the political murders of some 1,200 persons. The truth or otherwise of these allegations needs to be found out. If we wish to get the era of political murders behind us, the Rule of Law should not be buried with a political deal.

Kobbekaduwa Commission Findings

'LTTE Responsible for Explosion'

The International Commission appointed by late President Premadasa to inquire into the death of ten senior officers of the Sri Lankan armed forces in a bomb explosion in August last year has in its findings confirmed that the LTTE was responsible for planting the explosive device which killed the officers and that the device that caused the explosion was a landmine and not a device attached to the underside of the vehicle in which the officers travelled on the day of the incident. 'It was of the type used by the LTTE and had been left buried on the spot where the explosion occurred.'

The Commission's report with its findings was submitted to President D.B. Wijetunga on 24 June 1993.

The inquiry by a Commission of three Commonwealth judges into the death of Leit. Maj. Gen. Denzil Kobbekaduwa and nine other senior officers of the Sri Lankan armed forces, including Brigadier Vijaya Wimalaratne and Navy Commander Commodore Mohan Jayamaha, following the bomb blast at Araly Point, Kayts in the northern Jaffna peninsula on 8 August last year commenced on 26 May at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Centre in Colombo.

The Commission comprised Justice Austin Necabeohe Evans Amissah of Ghana (Chairman), Sir Kenneth James Keith of New Zealand and Justice Muhammadu Lawal Uwais of Nigeria.

Immediately after the blast, the LTTE claimed responsibility for placing and detonating the landmine which destroyed the vehicle in which the victims were travelling at the time of the explosion. The government also, after an internal inquiry blamed the LTTE for the murders. In fact at a public ceremony held in Jaffna some weeks after the incident, the leader of the Tamil Tigers, V. Prabhakaran, personally awarded medals to the cadres who the LTTE claimed planned and carried out the operation. However, those belonging to the opposition in southern Sri Lanka accused those in the government of former President Premadasa, and some even accused the former President himself of having conspired to kill the officers.

Reports began to be circulated that the explosive device that killed the officers was fitted to the vehicle in which they travelled, and that some within the army itself were responsible for the blast. Mrs. Kobbekaduwa herself wrote to the President and demanded an independent investigation by a reputed international team. Against this background, the government acceded to her demand, and with the consent of her lawyers referred the investigation to three commonwealth judges.

The terms of reference of the inquiry were: (a) the nature of the explosive device and its precise location at the time of the explosion; (b) the circumstances under which the explosive device came to be sited on the location of the blast; (c) the person or persons responsible for the siting of the explosive device; (d) the manner in which the explosive device was detonated, and if it was detonated other than by the vehicle conveying the officers traversing over the device, the person or persons responsible for such detona-

tion; and (e) whether any person or persons conspired or abetted in siting and detonating the explosive device.

At the commencement of the inquiry, the Commission's Chairman announced that they were required to transmit to the President within six weeks from the date of the Commission's appointment a report containing their findings. He also said that theirs was a fact-finding Commission and not a Court. No one had been accused and no one was being prosecuted. There were no parties to the case before the Commission which was being assisted by the Additional Solicitor General, Mr. Upawansa Yapa PC who was not representing the Attorney General. He was acting as Counsel for the Commission helping them in the task of finding the facts. His duties with respect of the Commission would be 'performed solely at our request and on our instructions.'

Several witnesses, many of them from the armed forces including the General Officer Commanding the Joint Operations Command, Gen. Hamilton Wanasinghe, and Mrs. Lali Kobbekaduwa, wife of the late General gave evidence before the Commission.

The members of the Commission made a special visit to London to record the evidence of a British expert Mr. J.R. Wyatt who had previously submitted a report on the basis of his examination of some photographs taken immediately after the explosion occurred. It was Mr. Wyatt's report that was used by opposition politicians to support the allegation that the explosive device had been fitted to the vehicle in which the deceased officers travelled.

In its findings, the Commission has rejected the allegation that the explosive device had been fitted to the underside of the vehicle. As to the circumstances under which the explosive device came to be sited on the location at which the explosion occurred, the Commission said that either the landmine was one left on Kayts Island at the time of the withdrawal of the LTTE and not discovered by the army in the course of its clearing operations, or the landmine was successfully brought into the island by the LTTE by infiltration after their withdrawal.

As to the person or persons responsible for the siting of the explosive device, the Commission said that it was clear that the landmine had been buried by the LTTE. It was impossible for the Commission to say which of the LTTE's men were involved. It was noted that according to press reports the LTTE had rewarded men whom it claimed had done this work. However the Commission cautioned against accepting this claim as regards the identity of those involved as it could even be a propaganda ploy.

As to the manner in which the explosive device was detonated, it was obvious to the Commission, on the basis of the evidence of the Senior Government Analyst which was to some extent supported by the evidence of Mr. J.R. Wyatt, that the landmine which the vehicle went over detonated when the rear wheel of the off-side of the vehicle went over it.

As to whether there was any conspiracy by any person or persons, it was the Commission's firm view that the LTTE was responsible for laying the explosive device. If reports in the newspapers were anything to go by, the persons who conspired and abetted in laying the mine were LTTE's men who constructed, organised and laid it

Medical Equipment Blocked by Govt. to be Released

Following widespread protests and criticism, the government of Sri Lanka is to release medical equipment valued at Rs. 150 million donated by the British government to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital which has been lying idle in a veritable container graveyard alongside the Welisara Chest Hospital in the south of the island.

According to the British Deputy High Commissioner, Ronal Nash, the equipment arrived in Colombo at the beginning of this year. It was part of the £20 million grant pledged by Britain to reconstruct the war-torn Northeast.

The twenty-five sealed containers with the most modern medical equipment, including CAT scanning machines, X-ray equipment, Bronchoscope with camera, Opthalmic unit with Opthalmic microscope, diesel generators, ambulances and ENT equipment, have been blocked on government orders from being transported to the Jaffna Hospital from the time they were received.

A Defence Ministry official sought to explain away the government's action by saying that the equipment in the 25 containers were far in excess of what was required in the Jaffna area, and that they would make the Jaffna Teaching Hospital the best in Sri Lanka which was not under the control or accountable to the Health Ministry in Colombo.

The equipment originally constituted a part of a gift package from the British government being a segment of a massive aid commitment by western aid donors who were pleased by the prospects of peace in the Northeast after the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 1987. The anticipated peace was short-lived as the IPKF-LTTE confrontation broke out in October 1987. As the talks between the Premadasa government and the LTTE were continuing, the IPKF withdrew, but again the war broke out between government forces and the LTTE and all hopes and prospects of peace were shattered as were the expectations of massive aid that was promised by donor countries for the reconstruction of the war-ravaged Northeast, and for the rehabilitation of the people.

However the medical aid pledged to the Northeast by the British government through the British Council only arrived early this year. But the Ministry of Health is reported to have been strongly opposed to the transport of any of the equipment to the North, and the reason given was the continuing war. 'The gift is part of many pledges to an overall plan to rehabilitate the North and East on the understanding that peace has returned. But the Tigers have resumed the war. In view of the changed situation, how the gifted equipment should be utilised would have to be reviewed in consultation with the British authorities,' a high ranking Health Ministry official was reported to have said.

The opposition to the release of the medical equipment by the Health Ministry had the strong backing of the Joint Operations Command of the armed forces, who were reported to have been 'concerned about an unwitting outcome the granting of the medical equipment will entail in enhancing the fighting capabilities of the separatist terrorists.' Another senior official at the JOC is quoted as saying, 'Providing the Jaffna peninsula with hi-tech equipment at this juncture will only help the terrorists to strengthen themselves to fight us.'

It is learnt that the British High Commission expressed its displeasure at the government's failure to permit the transport of medical aid that the

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Arrest of Tamils in Colombo

Amnesty International Protests

Continuing reports of widespread arrests and detention of Tamils residing in Colombo and other areas in south Sri Lanka have prompted the international human rights organisation, Amnesty International, to express concerns. The statement issued by the AI dated 21 June 1993 states:-

Amnesty International is concerned about reports of arbitrary arrests of hundreds of members of the Tamil community in the past three weeks in and around Colombo. It is urging the government to implement fully the measures announced on 10 June 1993 to guard against widespread arbitrary detention and to publicise the measures widely.

Over the past two to three weeks, many hundreds of Tamil people have been arbitrarily detained by police in and around the capital city, Colombo. They appear to have been detained solely on the basis of their ethnic origin. Some were questioned and released after several hours; others have been held for days before being released, sometimes on payment of a bribe. Some have been brought before magistrates and released on bail or kept in custody even though the police have not specified that the individual is wanted for any known offence. It is not known how many people remain in detention.

The arrests began soon after elections to provincial councils had been held, which the ruling United National Party won outright in four out of the seven provinces in which elections were held. The arrests are apparently connected with investigations into the assassinations of opposition leader Lalith Athulathmudali and President Ranasinghe Premadasa on 23 April and 1 May respectively, and with reports that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have infiltrated the city. Police have attributed both assassinations to the LTTE, which is engaged in armed conflict with the government for a separate Tamil state in the northeast of the island.

It is common for Tamil people in Colombo to be stopped by police and detained for questioning if they are not carrying identity documents, if they are visitors to or newly-arrived in the city, or if they are only temporarily resident there. There have also been regular complaints that some police officers and others require payments from prisoners or their relatives in order to secure their release. Many people come to Colombo on business, to visit friends or relatives and in order to apply for passports and other official documents which they cannot get elsewhere. People who have not been issued with official identity cards, such as some Tamil people from the tea estate areas of the hill country, are particularly vulnerable to arrest. In the past two weeks, however, people have been detained regardless of whether they could demonstrate long-standing residence and employment in Colombo and regardless of whether they were in possession of identity documents.

Tamil political leaders have raised a series of complaints with the government about these arrests, protesting that they are indiscriminate and arbitrary; that bribes have been paid to police officers to secure release in some cases; that women have been taken from their homes by male police officers at night, without an escort; and that men and women have been kept together overnight in police stations.

At a meeting with the Tamil politicians on 10 June 1993, Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremasinghe and the senior police and Ministry of Defence officials agreed to several measures to help remedy the situation. Amnesty International is urging the authorities to monitor the implementation of these measures to ensure that they are adhered to and that people are only arrested when there are clear grounds to do so.

The government agreed that the measures would be publicised and Amnesty International is asking for them to be made public repeatedly in all the media in order that the public can be fully informed of the procedures currently in force.

Amnesty International understands that the measures agreed to, include that:

- wherever possible, police will take statements from people at their homes or workplaces instead of taking them into custody;
- because of communication difficulties in some cases, people will be able to write their statements themselves, sign them, and hand them over to the police;
- if it is necessary to detain a person, their relatives or others at their home will be given in writing the name and rank of the arresting officer, the time and date of the arrest and told which police station they were being taken to;
- if desired, women can be escorted by a person of their choice if taken to a police station;
- on release, a certificate will be issued to prevent their re-arrest for routine questioning of the same kind;
- detainees will be released at the place they were arrested, and the person receiving them will sign for their release;
- facilities to obtain passports and other documents will be provided outside Colombo to reduce the need for people to travel to the capital.

Strangulation of Jaffna

by S. Ratnarajah, Jaffna

The government of Sri Lanka has repeated ad nauseam that the war in the North and East is **not against Tamils** but only against the Tigers and that their intention was **'winning the hearts of the people** and liberating the Tamils from the Tigers.'

From Political to Military Solution

What was originally an option for a political solution of the Tamil problem, became slowly a simultaneous political and military solution and finally, the option for a political solution appears for all purposes given up (or pushed to a back seat) and the present stance is for a purely military annihilation of the peninsula. An intelligent reading of events in Colombo against the backdrop of events in the North shows that the government is moving fast with its strangulation of the peninsula and very soon the peninsula will be made a graveyard unsuitable for any human living. What was started in 1981 with the burning of the Public Library of Jaffna will close with the government declaration that the northern peninsula infested with Tigers has been converted into a war-cemetery and hence unsuitable for human living.

Winning the Tamil Hearts by Strangulation?

To understand the truth of the statement one has to go to Jaffna,

Continued on page 21

Tamil Refugees in Sri Lanka and the West

by Rajan Hoole

General

During the course of the conflict that followed the anti-Tamil violence of July 1983, in which the role of the state received wide publicity, about half the Tamil population of 2 million in the North-East are now estimated to have become refugees. Apart from deep rooted internal factors that fuelled the conflict, economic factors intimately linked to Western domination are also important. In pushing through economic programmes dictated by the West and the World Bank, traditional democratic freedoms and the freedom of labour to organise were sharply eroded between 1977-82. Britain, and more indirectly the US, were among those who helped the government to prosecute what was a disreputable war.

Most of the refugees were internal. Following the war of June 1990 half the Tamil population of Amparai and Batticaloa Districts became refugees. Nearly all of them remain within their districts. Most of the Tamils in the rural parts of Trincomalee, Vanni and Mannar Districts became refugees once more. A large part of them went northwards to Jaffna or to India. It is a small fraction of the refugees, predominantly from Jaffna, who have gone to western countries, that have aroused ire and disparaging comment in the West. This is a complex problem which needs to be tackled with understanding. Sadly even statesmen from Britain, the former colonial power, have been given to insensitive and ignorant remarks on the subject. The West is used to prominent dissidents walking into embassies and asking for asylum – something that makes those in the West feel good. But, such is the refusal to understand in the West, that ordinary persons whose lives are under very real threat, have to lie and pay heavily to get to safety. When the LTTE and the government were close between April 1988 to June 1990 and the Indian forces controlled the North-East, many Tamils with former militant connections, particularly deserters from pro-Indian militant groups, were in the position of being unsafe whether in Sri Lanka or India. Several of them disappeared in Colombo before complicated and expensive arrangements to leave the country could be completed.

The usual excuse given by Western officials is that these deserving cases suffer because so many others abuse the system. That is too simplistic a view. If there was a more open attitude on the part of immigration officials, and a person was confident that telling the truth would receive a sympathetic hearing, life on both sides would have been easier. I have had some very unpleasant encounters with Canadian and British officials where I was spoken to as if I were a liar and a criminal. I had only wanted a regular visitors visa. Young persons in danger with faltering English can hardly be expected to fare better. The fault does not lie with individual immigration officers. But it requires political will to understand, what is after all, a problem affecting a large number of Western and third world countries together with millions of people, and seek a more rational and humane approach. It means rather than individual countries taking *ad hoc* measures involving some embarrassing scenes, there must be a will to understand and politically take some responsibility for the well-being of people in countries where the refugees originate.

Before the Exodus

As the Sri Lankan's terms of trade declined sharply during the 70s, professionals found that they could not meet their material aspirations. Many of them decided to emigrate permanently the normal way. Following the experience of July 1987, a large number of Tamil professionals thought seriously for the first time of leaving the country. Such persons had no difficulty in going the normal way, either on their own steam or sponsored by a relative. The controversy does not lie with them.

The controversy lies with a much larger number from a lower economic stratum, who in the normal course of events would not have thought of emigration. They were young persons with a reasonably high level of education. True, the declining economic position of the country hit them seriously. One was growing unemployment. The other was that by the mid 70s even the capacity to build or acquire a decent house went beyond the ability of a local wage earner. Brothers had to shoulder the responsibility of getting a sister married, and a woman to be given in marriage required at least a dowry house in her name. Fortunately, high oil prices and employment opportunities in the Middle-East came to the rescue. Many young men went as craftsmen, technicians and labourers, and with their earnings fulfilled expectations at home. They mostly returned home after one or two contracts as planned. Several of them successfully invested their savings in workshops, agriculture and other ventures at home, and were economically stable. The change came with July 1983.

July 1983 – mid 1986

Following the violence of July 1983, there was a large exodus of Tamils from the South into the North-East. Jaffna itself had a huge refugee population. Jaffna had limited space, was industrially undeveloped and scope for adequate employment was limited. Employment or economic activity in Colombo at that time was a frightening prospect. For the first time people became dependent on family members in the Middle-East and elsewhere for money to buy food.

For the thousands of young Tamils working in the Middle-East and the Far-East, the prospect of going home looked very dim. They received frantic letters from home asking them not to come at any cost. The fear was real. I, then working abroad, remember visiting Sri Lanka against the advice of friends in October 1983. Feeling anxious myself, I asked Sinhalese friends to meet me at the airport. It was hard to imagine a Tamil labourer from the Middle-East with no friends in Colombo arriving at the airport. Moreover a worker in the Middle-East was obliged to leave on expiry of contract, usually about two years.

It was at this time that France, Germany and Switzerland became prominent destinations for Tamils leaving the Middle-East. Some made it to Canada by circuitous routes. We are not talking here about a number of persons from a different social category who were abroad in 1983, and whose minds were already set on settling, in the West. They used the violence at home to choose an advantageous country of domicile. Those going to countries in mainland Europe did not then regard them as permanent homes. It was either to keep going until things cooled down in Ceylon, or to go eventually to an English speaking country. This was also the time oil revenues were falling and employment in the Middle-East ceased to be attractive. Once European countries became established as places where employment could be found, these became alternatives to

the Middle-East for the much hard pressed youth in Jaffna. Again there was no intention of permanent settlement. The cost of going to Germany in 1984 was a modest Rs. 15,000/- (US$ 500/-). To Britain it was considerably higher.

Political Refugees: The Beginnings

This period also marked the beginning of youth seeking refuge for political reasons. With militant groups based in India and promoted by its agencies, dissent became a costly matter. Torture and internal killings became rife in the PLOTE, LTTE and TELO. A person leaving a group faced several risks.

Mano Master, a prominent TELO dissident, returned to Jaffna in 1984. The LTTE which took a long term view of things, marked him as a potential nuisance and using the fact that he no longer had the protection of the TELO, killed him. Some other TELO dissidents who returned to Jaffna, distributed protest leaflets. Kittu, then Jaffna leader, and now the LTTE's plenipotentiary in Geneva, came up to the leafleters and thrust the barrel of his pistol into the ear of the dissident who told me this story. The latter now lives in Canada.

In early 1985-90 dissidents from the PLOTE calling themselves the 'Sparks Group' returned to Jaffna and published the PLOTE's internal killings in a book. They were then persecuted by the PLOTE. Those from the 'Sparks' who did not eventually go abroad are now either in the LTTE's prisons or are hunted by the LTTE.

A new situation arose from May 1986 with the LTTE launching murderous attacks on rival groups in a bid to gain sole dominance. Hundreds of TELO cadres were shot and burnt at street junctions in Jaffna. A new mood of disillusionment descended on Jaffna. Several of the survivors with no means went to India, to be kept in camps until taken back to Ceylon for the use of the IPKF. A considerable section, disillusioned with the liberation struggle and having either connections or funds, left for the West. They had no other option.

Another category who started going West in considerable number were mature persons who left the LTTE. These were often persons who began to have doubts about the group from the mid 80s. These doubts were increased with the group's killing of TELO cadre. The LTTE leadership thought it wise to let them go. Those remaining at home were under constant suspicion. Several were advised to leave by the LTTE itself. It was from about this time that the LTTE starting recruiting the very young, later coming down to children.

June 1986 – 1987 end

The same pattern followed as the LTTE cracked down on the militant group EPLRF in December 1986 and on student dissent in the University of Jaffna and in high schools. Even though several leading members of the EPRLF, Unlike the TELO, had a political vision, this dramatic development further widened divisions, and the EPRLF folded up as a political entity. Several members escaped to the South or to India and went to the West. Many nursed their wounds in India and returned with the IPKF. Several ended up in LTTE prisons and many junior cadres like their TELO counterparts were released. Others met with gruesome ends. Over 50 prisoners died in a single prison massacre in March 1987, in the LTTE's Brown Road camp.

Of the students who were marked during this time, one leader, Vimaleswaran, was killed by the LTTE in July 1988. Several others went abroad. I can offhand think of two living in France and several elsewhere, one having had the distinction of escaping from an LTTE prison.

When the Sri Lankan forces launched Operation Liberation in May 1987 in the Vadamaratchi sector of Jaffna, several hundred young men were summarily killed. Two thousand or more were transferred to a prison camp in the South. Jaffna had witnessed several massacres before, mainly between July 1983 – May 1985. But there was also then an optimism that peace with dignity would soon be concluded. It was in this frame of mind that thousands had joined militant groups to fight the Sri Lankan forces, and relatively few civilians thought of quitting.

What the LTTE's bloody internal repression of 1986, and then the devastating Operation Pawan by the IPKF in October brought home to many was that, the callous character of the state powers, in combination with the internal compulsions of the LTTE's politics, did not portend peace. Apart from demoralisation of the populace, pressing security and economic needs, spurred families to get young males out of the country.

The Exodus – Internal Aspects

It has been mentioned that the biggest single cause of refugees until August 1987 had been the military action of the Sri Lankan forces. A large number of villages, particularly in the Trincomalee District, were destroyed. In Jaffna itself constant bombing and shelling destroyed hundreds of houses and large areas became ghost habitations. The overwhelming majority of those displaced were internal refugees, and a significant section went to India. Rural youth, particularly from the East, generally lacking means of escape and whose families faced the brunt of the Sri Lankan army's brutality, joined militant groups in large numbers. Their families in turn, often, lived in refugees camps under very poor conditions. Insecurity, death and deprivation became a part of life that they were forced to come to terms with. A veil was thrown over their existence, and they were incapable of making anyone from Colombo to the West sit up and take notice.

The Tamil refugee problem, as far as the West was concerned was to do with a much smaller section with some access to resources or, ties of kin or friendship in the West. They responded to a situation fraught with danger and hopelessness as was best within their means, as did refugees through the ages. A powerful consideration governing their response, which atomised humanity in the West would find strange, is that it was most often the considered response of a family, rather than of an individual.

The LTTE was aware of the disillusionment and questioning that accompanied its blood stained ascent to become the 'sole representatives of the Tamil speaking people'. The first thing it did after the massacre of TELO militants in May 1986 was to warn against any 'discussion or analysis of the event', through mobile loud speakers. Had the option to leave the land not been available, demoralisation and a worsening economic and military situation (as happened) threatened to politicise Jaffna folk, particularly the middle class, who were both educated and articulate. The LTTE almost consciously operated the safety valve of emigration and institutionalised it to its own benefit.

Thus during the latter half of 1986 the LTTE supervised newspapers in Jaffna marked a confluence of incongruous messages. On the one hand were speeches of hyper-patriotism and pictures of long queues filing past corpses of Sri Lankan soldiers on exhibition. On the other were benevolent advertisements from travel agents offering novel one way tours, with

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claims of protection from sundry deities. Families pawned or sold their lands and last jewels to send a male brother or child out of the country. Apart from guaranteeing greater security, once debts were paid off, remittances from refugees in the West helped families to repair damaged houses, and maintain a frugal level of nutrition.

The system worked well for the Tigers in the short term. Unlike the refugees who had been part of the freedom struggle, the other refugees were largely unpoliticised. In preventing a backlash to the repression and hopelessness characterising Tiger politics, this exodus worked well. The LTTE further received an income in the form of cuts from the travel agents and collections in Europe. Those unpoliticised upon leaving were even more likely to remain so. Their indebtedness and the constant threat of deportation, gave the more perverse and thoughtless of them a vested interest in the continuance of the war and hence in the LTTE. Playing on their fears and sensibilities the Tigers politicised many of the refugees in the West at the lowest possible level – the level of their expatriate supporters among the elite. A network was established to keep these refugees supplied with videos of events such as exhibitions of SL army corpses and weapons, Tiger functions and speeches, and scenes of massacres by SL forces, where the LTTE's role was by no means creditable. The LTTE thus carved out for itself the role of a martinet among these refugees and instituted useful financial arrangements.

This covers a section of the refugees who were victims of political circumstances, but whose primary motivations were not political. Tamils going to continental Europe in the 70s were a trickle. But the links established opened the possibility of larger numbers seeking refuge there after July 1983. By so linking its politics to the exodus, the Tigers were able to obviate the necessity that would have arisen for a mass politics that addressed basic issues of human existence. These would have involved protection of life, education and mobilising the human potential so as to safeguard the present and future of the people during a struggle. While those old enough to see that things had gone seriously amiss emigrated, the Tigers began recruiting the very young. What resulted was a politics of death rather than of life.

Those who raised questions of democracy and survival at home were thus isolated and marginalised. Without the prospect of mass mobilisation, they could be dealt with easily. The Tigers were thus able to cover up with patriotic glitter, what increasingly became a politics of torture, imprisonment and hit lists. The exodus played a crucial role in giving the Tigers this flexibility.

August 1987 – June 1990

Following the Indo-Lanka Accord of July 1987, the Sri Lankan government released thousands of Tamil militants and militant suspects it had been holding under PTA. A number of them had gone to prison believing in the struggle and came out disillusioned by the intervening internecine strife. With the onset of the war between the LTTE and the IPKF, nearly all of them were placed in a position of immense danger. Few had any stomach to carry arms. The militant groups with the IPKF started looking for persons with past associations with non-LTTE groups. Some of them were told by Indian officers in menacing tones, 'You either work for us, or you are against us'. The LTTE for its part left behind maniacal killers like Lollo to finish off anyone remotely suspected of links with the IPKF. Also targeted or threatened were persons whose active social concern for a desperate populace tended to diminish the LTTE's hold over the people. Another significant category in danger consisted of those who had left the LTTE before the IPKF arrived. Several of them were killed by pro-IPKF groups. The same fate overtook several of those taken in as LTTE suspects by the IPKF and later released. India had long ceased to be a safe place. From early 1988 there was a very large exodus of persons in these categories reaching Europe and Canada, in addition to those leaving for other pressing reasons.

June 1990 – Present

The beginning of the war was marked by the LTTE killing several hundred surrendered Muslim & Sinhalese policemen and the Sri Lankan forces killing thousands of Tamil civilians in reprisals. Hundreds more were conducted away from refugee camps in places as widespread as the Eastern University, Nilaveli, Mutur and Veeramunai by government forces. Although literally hundreds of witnesses testify to this, the government continues to deny responsibility. The only indications suggest that most of them had been killed. From the pre-July 1987 to the present war, the ratio of number of prisoners held to the number of those eliminated took a sharp plunge. Jaffna was once more subject to bombing and shelling.

As the result, Tamil people in general lost all faith in the return of peace. As to the government, they became totally alienated and dreaded its forces. In the case of the LTTE any illusions about its benevolent intentions vanished, its actions were viewed with greater cynicism and its repression was greatly feared. Understanding that there was much public disquiet and questioning about the war, the LTTE made no bones about where the people stood. Shortly after June 1990, the LTTE's deputy leader Mahattaya declared that all persons and belongings on the soil of Tamil Eelam were the property of their struggle. To stem the heightened exodus from Jaffna, a stringent visa system was established for the first time.

Once more the Tigers took care to pacify the elites, particularly if they could perform some service to legitimise the Tigers. Some of them made speeches extolling and encouraging the very young who served the Tigers, while obtaining visas to send their own children to Colombo and the West. Others bided their time, making contacts in the LTTE by doing them favours and then fled after working out a visa.

Meanwhile, fearing any call for accountability, the LTTE cracked down even on independent intiatives by students and other groups to mobilise towards caring for the large number of refugees flooding into Jaffna. Several of them who wanted to be of service were frustrated and harassed into fleeing Jaffna. The LTTE's political prisoners climbed to a number around 4000. Many of them had no previous militant involvement.

This new exodus was prompted by a total loss of hope in any prospect of a settled life without a high probability of sudden death. Colombo was only nominally safe with chances of employment almost nil. In the course of security operations in Colombo, there was regular harassment of Tamils and the ocasional disappearance. To survive in Colombo until foreign travel could be arranged was in addition an expensive affair, affordable mainly to those with foreign contacts. The whole operation was most often financed from abroad through outright grants, loans, or through some special arrangement with a known agent enabling payment later by intalments.

(To be continued in next issue).

Rajiv Gandhi Assassination

Prosecution Presents Case Amidst Defence Objections

In the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, the prosecution has completed its opening presentation before the presiding judge S.M. Siddickk. Some of the defence Counsel appearing for the accused had raised many preliminary legal and procedural objections which are awaiting rulings from the Supreme Court. It is only thereafter, the actual trial with the presentation of evidence will commence.

The trial is expected to be one of the longest in India's history of criminal trials. Judging by the sheer length of the prosecution's opening statement which took four days to complete, it is reasonably anticipated that it will take many months to present the mass of evidence gathered by the Special Investigation Team (SIT).

According to the prosecution, the evidence would include several diaries, mass of correspondence and account books seized by the SIT from some of the accused men, other alleged LTTE cadres and their supporters. The diaries and books reportedly maintained by Sivarasan, also described as the 'One-Eyed Jack', who according to the prosecution masterminded the operational aspects of the assassination, are said to contain many details of financial transactions, gold smuggled into India from Sri Lanka and how disbursements were made to the accused and others.

The conspiracy to assassinate the former Prime Minister, according to the prosecution, was conceived and hatched in Jaffna between July 1987 and May 1991 by the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, Pottu Amman described as the LTTE's Intelligence Chief and Akhila described as the Deputy Chief of the LTTE's Women's Intelligence Wing.

As to the motive for the assassination, the prosecution alleges that Prabhakaran felt that he had been 'stabbed in the back' by Rajiv Gandhi following the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord in July 1987. The decision by Rajiv Gandhi to send in the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) at the request of the then Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayawardene had also angered Prabhakaran. Anyone who supported the Accord and the continued presence in Northeast Sri Lanka of the IPKF which was in confrontation with the LTTE was seen by the Tigers as a traitor deserving the ultimate punishment, and in this connection the prosecution cites the murders of the TULF leader A. Amirthalingam and the EPRLF leader K. Padmanabha as examples. As another element for the motive, the prosecution alleges that the suicide by consuming cyanide of 12 leading LTTE cadres following their capture by the Sri Lankan security forces in September 1987 and the failure of Rajiv Gandhi to secure their freedom had served to produce in Prabhakaran a bitter hatred towards the former Prime Minister.

According to the prosecution, some eight months before the assassination in September 1990, one group consisting of Vijayan, his wife Selvalakshmi and her father Bhaskaran, all allegedly belonging to the LTTE, arrived in Tamil Nadu. They rented three houses. A second group, consisting of Robert Payas, his family and Jayakumar and his wife Shanthi landed in India later. Some months later, Sriharan described as a hardcore member of the LTTE arrived in India landing at Kodaikkara on the Vedaranyam coast and was received by a local smuggler and Tiger supporter named Shanmugam.

Nine other persons, described by the prosecution as the 'core group', including Dhanu (the suicide-bomber), Sivarasan, Subha and Nehru, arrived in India on 1 May 1991. They occupied and began operating from the three houses previously rented by the first group. In preparation for the assassination, the group carried out a rehearsal – a dry run of the plan they had devised to assassinate Mr. Gandhi – on 7 May when the Janatha Dhal leader V.P. Singh addressed a mass meeting at Madras. The prosecution is to produce in evidence a video film of this dry run showing the presence of Sivarasan seated in the front row, and letters allegedly written by Dhanu and Subha to Akhila and Pottu Amman after the dry run. The bag containing the letters was recovered by the SIT in a pit at Kadaiakkari.

The details of the assassination were worked out in detail on 20 May 1991 at Padma's house at which each of the participants were allocated specific tasks. According to the prosecution, on this day Dhanu had fallen ill and was treated at a Madras Nursing Home where Padma worked as a nurse. Dhanu recovered from her illness after being given tablets of Brufen. It is also said that the main three women conspirators, Dhanu, Nalini and Subha, went to a Hindu temple near Villivakkam the day before the assassination to seek the blessings of the Gods for their operation.

The lawyers appearing for the accused have raised many preliminary objections which are awaiting the ruling of the Supreme Court. Mr. S. Doraiswamy, defence counsel for Nalini and eight other accused, has raised an issue of fundamental importance to the very legality of the proceedings. He has argued that the provisions of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) were not applicable to the Rajiv assassination case, and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) did not have the statutory authority to investigate the case. He told the judge that the charge-sheet had no material to show that the accused were seeking to 'overawe' the government, an essential requirement for invoking the provisions of the TADA. The main ingredient in the definition of a 'terrorist act' under this law as 'an intent to overawe the government'.

Mr. Doraiswamy has also argued that Rajiv Gandhi was 'an ordinary citizen' at the time of his killing 'and enjoyed' no special status 'to justify the use of TADA'. The fact that he was the former Prime Minister was no justification for the use of the extraordinary law. What defence counsel was seeking to establish was that this murder was a settling of a 'personal enmity between Rajiv Gandhi and Velupillai Prabhakaran'.

Defence Counsel T. Ramados, appearing for some of the accused, told the presiding judge S.M. Siddickk that the former Prime Minister and the Tamil Tigers who were accused of masterminding his killing had reached an amicable agreement during the talks that took place between Rajiv Gandhi and LTTE's emissaries only a few weeks prior to the assassination. He claimed that during these talks Gandhi had 'almost agreed' for the setting up of an independent state of Eelam if he came to power again. After obtaining such an agreement from Mr. Gandhi, there was no reason for the LTTE to have been involved in his assassination, Mr. T. Ramados suggested.

However, knowledgeable sources in Madras have a different version as to what actually transpired at a meeting held between the late Rajiv Gandhi and Mr. Kasi Anandan on behalf of the LTTE at New Delhi at the latter's

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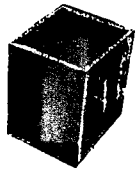

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Premadasa's Esteem for Prabhakaran

'It is an irony that the Tigers, whom the slain President Premadasa admired so much, should have emerged as the prime suspects in his assassination. . .If Premadasa had solved the ethnic issue, Prabhakaran (leader of the LTTE) would have been named the Chief of the armed forces. Such was the esteem the President had for him,' the Madras-based Indian daily *The Hindu* has reported, quoting a Sri Lankan Cabinet Minister.

The report added: 'The Minister, who did not want to be named, said Premadasa always thought highly of the LTTE and its military prowess. And this was further strengthened when the Tigers managed to 'keep at bay' the Indian Peace Keeping Force.

'He said Premadasa never changed his opinion even after the Government-LTTE talks broke down in 1990 and the war resumed with a vengeance. He was convinced that the LTTE was one-up on the Sri Lankan army and told even the military leadership what he thought of the continuing war,' the Minister added.

'The Minister, once a staunch Premadasa-loyalist, was convinced that the late President was "quite gullible" and was "impressionistic". He got easily carried away but once he had made up his mind, it was difficult to reason with him.

'Army sources, when asked to comment on the proposition of Prabhakaran being their commander, said: "He may be an unquestioned military leader, but then we may also have been forced to wear a cyanide capsule around our necks when we go to the battlefield." They regretted the wastage of talent and motivation of the Tiger cadres on a "misguided mission".

'Only when you talk to them do you realise how nice they are. If they have become violent, it is because we have treated them badly,' Premadasa reportedly told this Minister and had blamed the former President Mr. J.R. Jayewardene, for the situation in the North-East.

'The Minister said the LTTE, which had been forced to return to the negotiating table because of IPKF pressure, had made common cause with Premadasa to throw the IPKF out. So it often bluffed the gullible President.

'The Minister said none, including himself, had the courage to tell the autocratic President that the LTTE was bluffing him as the rebels sent their wounded cadres to Tamil Nadu for treatment.

'The slain President trusted the LTTE so much that it was a mystery to him when the LTTE broke off the peace talks and resumed fighting, the Minister said.

'It was not only the LTTE who bluffed Premadasa, the Minister said and added that a gentleman, knowing Premadasa's weakness for the occult, had given him what looked like a squirrel's nail, but had said it was rhinocero's horn. Premadasa who was told that the horn would make him more powerful, always had it in his pocket and the donor was soon appointed as the Ambassador to an Asian nation.'

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experience life there, go to areas captured by the army to see the destruction and looting performed by the forces, make a risky journey through the Kilali-lagoon and finally see how Jaffna survives amidst a graveyard situation.

The government and its army appears to think that they can win the hearts of people by strangulation of the peninsula, shooting of passenger boats at mid-lagoon and denying the minimum food and medicine for survival. The reaction of the JOC and the Essential Services Command to requests by genuine civilians for basic necessities is wanting in logic, reasonability and human considerations.

An Illogical Embargo

Why do they insist on a list of 48 or more prohibited items to the North and only 3 such items to the East? Are not Tigers present in the East as well? Or is it because the government does not want the Sinhalese and the Muslims in the East to be devoid of their essentials while the people in the North can die of starvation?

What is the logic behind the list of 48 or more items prohibited into the North? What is the rationality and human consideration behind that list? The government and the army seems to argue, anything used by the Tigers must not be allowed into the North. Hence they prohibit shoe polish (as if Tigers depend on polished shoes), white paper, chocolate (the Tigers neither eat chocolates nor smoke cigarettes like the army personnel).

Jaffna Peninsula is now a Slow-death Chamber

Whatever sanctimonious claims may be made of the intentions of the Government and the Forces, with 'the love for the Tamils and hate for the Tigers', an intelligent reading of measures taken recently by the State give rise to strong suspicion on the part of well meaning Tamils of the North that the Government is adopting a policy of 'slow genocide of the Tamils in the North'. If the State forces in their present position of strength around the peninsula were to run over and indiscriminately do aerial attacks and finish the northern operation, then a cry may be heard all over the world and the aid may not flow in. Hence the government while boasting that 'it is the only country in the world that feeds and cures its enemies in war', insidiously and cunningly engages in making the Peninsula into an isolated prison with less-than-minimum food, medicine, communication, transport etc., needed for life.

There is no legal entrance or exit to the Peninsula! The media-magicians of Colombo keep telling the Sinhalese in the South that there are more than three ways of going to Jaffna. But none of these journalists ever dared to test the veracity of their statements. Tens of thousands of Tamils are stranded in the south or imprisoned in the North, because the State points to ways which are either fatal or unrealizable. If we take Elephant Pass as the normal route, people know too well that it is not only the Tigers on their side but also the army on its side, who have planted land mines. Does the government want innocent civilians to be victims of these death-traps? If we take KKS, there is not the slightest arrangement made on the part of the government. How often has the government been requested to operate a passenger service between Trincomalee and Point Pedro/KKS? How many are stranded in Colombo for many weeks to be fleeced by t[illegible] hotels and hanging for days and hours before the JOC can give a passage from Trinco to Point Pedro?

Slow Death in Progress

With the excuse that all medical help to the Jaffna hospital is beneficial to the Tigers, important and urgent equipment is held up in Colombo. With

Continued on page 29

New Directions for Tamil Struggle

by A. Govindan

The assassination of President Premadasa at a May Day parade in Colombo underscores the impasse the national liberation struggle is at. The response of both the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam has been 'Business as usual', while claiming to be open to a political solution through negotiation.

From the nationalist (or Eelamist) lobby we hear the same tired old strategies which boil down to the slogan – 'Eelam or Death'. In favourable contrast, there have recently been in these pages three important contributions from the Left.

R. Manikkalingam; N. Shanmugaratnam and S. Sivasegaram[1], by tackling aspects of the Tamil struggle outline new directions for the liberation movement. What follows below is a modest contribution to a discussion which should be ongoing and collective to be truly productive.

There are four interlocking themes that motivate this paper. They are: i) The need to end the war, ii) The role of Tamil people in the struggle, iii) The real meaning of National Liberation and iv) The need to be inclusive of the aspirations of the Sinhala and Muslim and Up-Country Tamil communities.

Few are unaware of the desperate conditions in the North. The pressing need of ordinary people there is for the lifting of the blockade on food and medicines. They live in fear of imminent death by shelling from the Armed Forces and torture and/or imprisonment from the Tigers. How much longer can they be punished for a struggle fought in their name? In the East there have been 5,000 'disappearances' of Tamil youths in the last three years alone. Muslim and Sinhala villagers live in fear of massacres by the Tigers while Tamil villagers are the target of revenge attacks from Home-Guards and State forces. This insanity must end.

It is in a climate of peace and in a demilitarised society, that the Tamil people will regain their voice and be participants and leaders in the liberation struggle. At present it is those who wield guns who command authority. There is no structured relationship between the Tigers and the mass of Tamil civilians. None of the militant groups had a clear perspective of encouraging the people through their own organisations in a democratic fashion to determine the aims and demands, the conduct and tactics of the struggle.

Further, national liberation should be given its widest meaning. It should be understood not only as the overthrow of Tamil national oppression but also as a radical, democratic and emancipatory project. We should not exchange one oppressor for another even if he speaks our own language and hails from the same village. Women who have fought as equals on the battlefield and borne the greater burder of war should not be returned to the bondage of the patriarchal family and conservative beliefs. There must be the promise of a larger and better stake in life for the poor and the dispossessed and those from depressed castes if their sacrifice is to have been worthwhile.

Finally, our struggle if it is to prevail must be inclusive of the needs and aspirations of the other Sri Lankan communities. A just settlement of the National Question will benefit the Muslim and Sinhala people too. It is the 'bogey' of separatism that has enabled Sinhala politicians to deflect attention from their economic mismanagement and human rights abuses. The message must be got across that an end to the war means an end to the return of their menfolk in body bags and the squandering of development funds on military hardware. Our peoples have more in common than our leaders would care to admit.

The Myths

There are two myths that presently bedevil perceptions on the war and its resolution. One is the widely held belief that Premadasa was more likely to be amenable to Tamil claims for justice. Second is the sentimental hope that 'Mother India' will bail us out of our present predicament if only we behave ourselves.

As soon as he came into office, President Premadasa was at pains to portray himself as a friend to the minority communities. Yet a critical look over his term reveals that little of substance was achieved towards a peaceful settlement. The Parliamentary Select Committee was a sham right from the start with neither the U.N.P. nor the S.L.F.P. committing themselves to make any concessions to Tamil demands.[2] As Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces he was ultimately responsible for the prosecution of the war.

In a brilliant analysis elsewhere[3] Quadri Ismail notes that '. . . .all Premadasa desires is some means of keeping the Tigers alive so he can remind the Sinhala voter, without actually saying so, that he intends to exterminate them.' Meanwhile the Tigers too are complicit in this strategy because '. . . Prabakaran needs the war in order to maintain his grip over the Tamil people. For only as long as the war goes on can he convince the Jaffna public that the Sinhala state is racist and cannot be relied upon. This way, he can be certain of their support, however shaky, since in peacetime the Tamils are likely to complain about his rule of terror.'

Premadasa was a populist albeit of the right wing variety. His slender vote base meant he had to be seen to be the 'common man's' President. The enfranchisement of Up-Country Tamils saved the Central Province for the U.N.P. in the recent Provincial Council elections. His ostensible championing of social justice drew around him many erstwhile leftist and liberal intellectuals who theorised an ideology out of the politics of pragmatism. His assassination was a gift for the U.N.P. as it removed their greatest electoral liability. Individual terrorism achieves nothing. Premadasa is dead but his policies remain in place and are pursued with equal zeal by the Sinhala ruling class.

A more serious myth and one which has had tragic consequences for Tamils has been the supposed benevolent role of India. The record of the misnamed 'Indian Peace Keeping force' should rebut any protestations of Indian Government goodwill towards the Tamil cause. (I make the distinction so often blurred between the Indian state and the Indian people.)

The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi was an awful blunder. It lost the Tamils the support of the people of Tamil Nadu who had been the most loyal and selfless friends of the struggle. It paved the way for the repatriation often involuntary, of Tamil refugees back to the war zone. It was always the pressure of the South Indian Tamils and never Indira Gandhi or M.G. Ramachandran which focussed attention on the Tamils' plight.

The Indian state however has always been a manipulator and sometime actor in Tamil politics. Its involvement in Sri Lanka has always been an extension of its position as regional superpower. Having perfected the art of state terrorism in the Punjab and currently brutally crushing the **Intifada** (uprising) in Kashmir, can we expect an Indian Government to genuinely support us? If our struggle is just, so too is that of the brave Kashmiris and they deserve

the solidarity of every Tamil.

Basis of Settlement

There is already the bare bones of a political settlement between the Sri Lankan Government and the Tigers. It is encapsulated in the Four Point proposal of Ceylon Workers Congress leader, S. Thondaman, and has the support of all Tamil parties outside of the LTTE as well as progressive individuals and organisations from the Sinhala and Muslim communities including the Nava Sama Samaja Party.

★ Permanently merged North-Eastern Province shall be the unit of devolution.

★ Substantial devolution of power ensuring meaningful autonomy to the unified unit.

★ Institutional arrangement within the larger framework of the unbifurcated North-Eastern province for the Muslim community ensuring its cultural identity and security.

★ Sinhalese will enjoy all the rights that other minorities have in the rest of the country.

Clearly this proposal constitutes an absolute minimum for an honourable solution on the part of the Tamil nation. Its shortcomings aside it should be defended against Sinhala nationalists who see it as too great a concession and against Tamil nationalists who believe in an all or nothing package.

The four point formula is the basis for both combatants to end hostilities and start negotiations. there must be an unconditional ceasefire and the immediate lifting of the economic and humanitarian blockade on the North.

However any talks between the Government and the Tigers should not be behind closed doors and in the obscene luxury of a Five Star hotel. If the Tigers truly believe in their self-appointed role as 'sole legitimate representatives' of the Tamil people, surely they have nothing to hide from us.

Certainly there is no right for either party to exclude any concerned group from participating. This includes all the ex-militant groups. While this writer deplores the mercenary role of some Tamil groups on the Government's side, none of the Tamil guerrillas have a blameless record. They each have no greater legitimacy than the other to participate in the peace process.

There should also be the participation of not only political parties but also trade unions, women's groups, religious organisations, non-Governmental organisations especially citizen's committees etc. In short it should aim to be a dialogue to which the majority of the Sinhala, Muslim and Tamil masses are encouraged and enabled to partake in.

Referendum

At any rate negotiations are not the end perspective for the Tamil struggle. Indeed the lack of legitimacy of all the Tamil parties and the inability of the people to articulate their opinions at present means we should swiftly move towards a democratic referendum in the North-East.

This referendum would enable all parties to test the popularity of their individual perspectives on taking the struggle forwards as well as the popularity of their organisations. A full range of options should be presented to the people ranging from unitary state to 'Eelam'. If the LTTE and any others wish to agitate for secession then they should be allowed to do so without state interference.

For a genuinely free and fair environment to test the democratic will of the people, there must be a demilitarisation of society. The Armed Forces should withdraw and all militant groups should be disarmed. In the long term a citizens' militia should be formed which will be drawn from the area in which it is based and accountable to the community.

The suggestions above are necessarily vague and sketchy. We are a long way from even the first step of a cessation of hostilities. What can we do to push both the Government and the Tigers towards this?

At present the Tamil diaspora and Tamils outside of the North-East in Sri Lanka are entrusted with much of this task. Among the diaspora it is not only the vocal minority but also the apathetic majority who should unite around one simple demand, 'End this War!'. All their not inconsiderable resources should be used to lobby, bully and blackmail towards this goal.

Tamils in Sri Lanka and outside must cease to believe that events in the North-East happen inside of a vacuum separate and apart from political life in the rest of the island.

The Sinhala people have been through the long nightmare of 1987-1990 when the twin terrors of State terrorism and JVP terrorism robbed them of 60,000 of the youngest and brightest youth. The trauma of those years will not be overcome for generations. In 1990 the Sinhala people were hungry for peace and more sympathetic than ever before to Tamil claims for justice. It was an opportunity squandered by 'Eelam War II'.

In the movements for human rights, for justice to the families of the 'Disappeared', in defence of democratic freedoms and the progressive anti-war Sinhala press e.g. *Yukthiya, Ravaya, Haraya* etc., Tamil people must unite with the Sinhalese and Muslims. In the campaigns of Up-Country Tamils to break out of the cycle of poverty and serfdom and against the privatisation of Tea Estates we should be alongside them.

The last word belongs to Rajani Thiranagama, socialist, feminist and educator. She was murdered in September 1989 in Jaffna by the LTTE.

'On top of all
No one cares for the people
The Sri Lankan government, the Indian Army
Not even the Tigers nor the other movements
Today we are a trapped people
We are made to walk this suicidal trip
Our great brave defenders and freedom fighters
Lure the enemy
Right to our doorstep
To the inside of the hospital
Start a fight
Ignite a landmine
Fire from each and every refugee camp
Escape to safety
And then come the shells whizzing, whizzing
Bloody hell
Tigers have withdrawn, while
We the sacrificial lambs
Drop dead in lots.' [4]

Notes.

[1] See Tamil Times, October 1992; January 1993 and March 1993 respectively.

[2] A select committee on the North-East chaired by Mangala Moonesinghe 'distinguished' only by the Srinivasan proposal backed by the UNP to de-link the North-East.

[3] 'Yet Another UNP Filibuster', *Pravada*, Vol.1 No.6 June 1992.

[4] *'Letter From Jaffna'* (November 1987), p.10 **Rajani Thiranagama Memorial Booklet**, South Asia Solidarity Group October 1989.

Bharatha Natyam Classes

Mrs. Anandarani Balendra *conducts the above classes at St. Mary's Church Hall, Neasden, London NW10. There are a few more vacancies. Those interested please apply* **early.** *Please telephone 081-459 4335 or write to 7 Oldfield Road, London NW10 9UD.*

The Assassination Probe

Serious lapses on the part of police personnel in charge of the security of the late President Premadasa have been identified by the Special Investigating Team (SIT) which is continuing with inquiries into his assassination. It is these lapses and the reported close association that had developed between the alleged suicide-killer of the President and his security staff that have led to the detention of Assistant Superintendent of Police, Douglas Perera and some other staff members and the continuing interrogation of others by the SIT.

One senior officer of the SIT said that had those in charge of the President's security taken proper measures at least after being told of the information that Deputy Inspector General of Police, Amarasena Rajapakse, had received on 9 March of a threat to the President's life by possible poisoning, Premadasa's assassination could have been avoided. If proper investigations had been carried out and adequate screening of all those who were connected or associated with the domestic staff at the President's private residence, Sucharitha, had been undertaken, it would have been possible to have found out, before the assassination, the true identity of the President's alleged killer who had by then worked his way into the confidence of the President's valet Mohideen, and through him others.

Further investigations into the assassinations of President Premadasa and Lalith Athulathmudali are reported to have revealed that the two alleged assassins had been resident for more than a year not very far from each other giving rise to fresh suspicion that they might have been in touch with each other in planning the murders.

Premadasa's suspected killer, Kulaveerasingham Veerakumar alias Babu, had been living at a flat along Dias Place, Kehelwatte, while the alleged killer of Lalith Athulathmudali, Kandiah Ragunathan, was just one hundred metres away at the Asiri Radio/TV Repairs shop along Central Road, Pettah, where he had worked until 2 pm on the day Athulathmudali was murdered. Both had come to Colombo from Jaffna in April 1992. Babu had arrived at Colombo on 5 April 1992 whereas Ragunathan had arrived on 22 April.

The Asiri Radio/TV Repairs shop, which now remains sealed by the police, had been taken on rent last year paying its Muslim owner a premium of Rs. 40,000 and a monthly rental of Rs. 1,500 by Iyakannu Sathivel and Ragunathan (Athulathmudali's assassin) who ran it in partnership. According to detectives, Sathivel and three others identified as Pedurupillai Jebanesan alias Kavushalyan, Selliah Kailendran and Markandu Selvarasa, all close associates, had 'gone missing' following the killing of Athulathmudali. It was Kailendran who had helped Babu (Premadasa's killer) to become a partner with an investment of Rs. 500,000 in a shop at Dias Place owned by a Sinhalese trader named Sujeeva.

Police are said to have established that Jebanesan and Ragunathan lived in close proximity to each other at Kotehena, while Sathivel lived in a rented room at Maligawatte. Meanwhile, detectives who had travelled to Valaichenai in Batticaloa district are reported to have arrested a 35-year-old woman, a native of Chavakachcheri in northern Jaffna, and a man described as her husband for being allegedly involved in the conspiracy to kill Athulathmudali whose alleged killer Ragunathan had been living in the couple's house at Gunananda Mawatte, Kotahena at the time of the assassination. The couple had disappeared following the murder on 23 April, but the police traced them to Valichenai on a tip-off.

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UNP-DUNF Coalition Mooted

Informed circles in Colombo are confident that a coalition between the ruling United National Party (UNP) and the opposition Democratic United National Front (DUNF) will become a certainty in the near future. Speculation regarding the alliance between the two parties has become strong following meetings between President D.B. Wijetunga, who is also the leader of the UNP, and Mr. Gamini Dissanayake who took over the leadership of the DUNF after the assassination of Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali.

Political analysts believe that there is no justifiable political or policy reason for DUNF's separate existence following the assassination of President Premadasa. It was the personal clash and friction between the former President on the one hand and Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake on the other and the failed impeachment move made against Premadasa by the latter two followed by their expulsion from the UNP which gave rise to the formation of the DUNF comprised of anti-Premadasa dissidents.

It is reported that many cabinet ministers are in favour of the return of the DUNF into the UNP fold. Even those ministers who are regarded as 'Premadasa Loyalists' who want to keep alive the memory and legacy of the slain President would appear to have raised no objections to the move. Although they remain angry that Gamini Dissanayake, Lalith Athulathmudali and other DUNFers carried on a campaign of personal vilification and character assassination of the late President, they are said to be looking at the issue from the point of view of UNP's self-preservation in power.

The electoral performance at the recently held Provincial Council elections of both the UNP and the DUNF would appear to have given the impetus for this mutual urge to merge. The UNP managed to achieve less than 50 per cent of the total votes and failed to obtain a majority of seats by itself in three of the seven Provincial Councils. Many analysts believe that the 14 per cent of the votes obtained by the DUNF was primarily responsible for the dent in the UNP's support base, particularly among the middle and upper classes. The DUNF's present

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leadership also could not have been too happy about their own performance. It failed to win more seats in any of the Councils than the other opposition SLFP-led Peoples Alliance. Many have almost written off the capacity of the DUNF developing into a powerful third force in the future.

Gamini Dissanayake's recent pronouncements seem to confirm his projected return to the UNP fold. On one occasion he said: 'We were anti-Premadasa. We were not anti-UNP'. At a recent press conference, he is reported to have said: 'We were never against the UNP, we brought up the impeachment motion against what we saw as abuse of presidential power. With the assassination of President Premadasa, confrontational politics has been diluted. Friendly politics should replace confrontational politics. The present President D.B. Wijetunga has already given signs that he will be a different person.'

Prime Minister Calls Prabhakaran for Direct Talks

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe, invited the leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) Velupillai Prabhakaran for direct talks to find a lasting political solution to the decade-long ethnic conflict, when he gave an interview on 23 June to a journalist during his recent visit to New Delhi.

The Prime Minister also denied that there was any truth in the speculative reports that the Sri Lankan government was planning to seek India's assistance for a second time to tackle the problem of the LTTE and to solve the ethnic problem. 'That chapter is over. We have to solve our internal problems'.

Mr. Wickremasinghe reiterated the Sri Lankan government's willingness to find a political settlement to the civil war which has so far claimed more than 33,000 lives. Asked if he had a time-frame in mind for finding a solution, the premier said: 'If possible, we would like to find a solution by tomorrow.' He explained that the government never really gave up the political option to settle the ethnic problem. The military action is no option as such, but is necessary to persuade the LTTE to give up guerrilla warfare as a futile exercise

The Prime Minister regretted that Mr. Prabhakaran had ignored the Sri Lankan government's invitation for direct talks. He admitted that neither he nor any of his ministerial colleagues had ever met the LTTE leader. He made it clear that in a democracy, the LTTE must be prepared to discuss its demands with the government across the table. It must be prepared to fight elections along with other political parties in the island. There was no way anyone could hand over power to the LTTE on a platter without holding elections.

Reacting to the PM's call to the Tiger leader for direct talks, a Tamil politician in Colombo said: 'Prabhakaran will never agree to such talks. During the 14 months of LTTE's negotiations with Premadasa and his Ministers, it was the others in the LTTE who engaged in the talks. He regards his personal security as most paramount and he will never venture out. The Tigers will take up the stand that it is not for others to decide to whom they will talk; the LTTE leadership will decide that.'

'Do Not Spend Aid on War'

World Bank Warns Govt.

Donor countries expect the government of Sri Lanka to scale down public expenditure, not to allocate their aid given for other purposes to the government's war or defence effort, and to utilise the funds granted without delay. This view of the donor countries had been conveyed by the World Bank representatives to top Treasury officials with whom they held talks in mid-June.

A World Bank delegation led by Mr. Pul Isenman, Head of the South Asia Department of the World Bank, was in Sri Lanka and held talks in Colombo in advance of the meeting of the Sri Lanka Aid Group held later in Paris.

Government expenditure will have to be compensated by increasing the revenue as the 850-900 million US dollars that Sri Lanka was expected to bid for from the Aid Group would be allocated to infrastructural development.

The World Bank and the donor countries have expressed displeasure that the funds allocated to Sri Lanka had not been utilised, and Mr. Isenman had advised Treasury officials that such delay was unacceptable. Sixty per cent of last year's aid had not been utilised especially in power, telecommunications, health and education schemes. For example, Rs. 2,500 million had not been utilised from the aid allocated to the power sector.

Last year, the United Kingdom, France and Norway had not contributed funds to Sri Lanka through the Paris Aid Group due to their concern on the issue of human rights violations in the island, and Japan was responsible for 70 per cent of last year's aid while the United States contributed 25 per cent.

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British Government had gifted to the Jaffna Hospital. Recently the London-based Standing Committee of Tamil Speaking People (SCOT) made representations to President D.B. Wijetunga to release the equipment on humanitarian grounds.

Many Tamil Members of Parliament also protested at the government's action. 'The problem of LTTE terrorism and the ongoing war cannot be an excuse for the denial of basic medical facilities to the besieged people. The Jaffna Hospital is the only one of its kind functioning in the entire northern province. It had also acquired a reputation as a sound Teaching Hospital. To deny the people of the north, medical attention and to delay implementing any projects aimed at increasing the medical service to be biased' against the people of the north, stated a letter to the President from the EPRLF Member of Parliament, Mr. S. Premachandran.

Health Minister, Mrs. Renuka Herath told newspapers recently that arrangements were being made to release medical aid to the Jaffna Hospital as quickly as possible. She said that the British Council had indicated their wish that the entire stock of equipment should be sent to the Jaffna peninsula. But she was awaiting the British Council's approval to divert some of the aid to other hospitals in the northeast region.

Presently the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the French medical NGO, Medicine Sans Frontieres (MSF), are involved in the running of the Jaffna Hospitals while the MSF and Cuban Medical Specialists are in service in the rest of the northeast region and the north central province. It is believed that the release of the British medical aid will considerably enhance the capability of the hospitals in the war-ravaged areas which have been starved of supplies for a long time. The Jaffna Teaching Hospital will benefit the most.

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WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

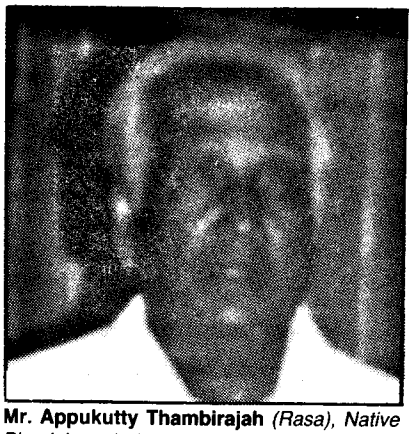
Haran *son of Dr. & Mrs. Poopalarajah of 24 Orchard Way, Shirley, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7NG and* **Sivajini** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Sivagnanasundaram of 15A First Cross Street, Dr. Radhakrishnan Nagar, Thiruvanmiyur, Madras 41 at Hotel Picnic Plaza, Ramakrishna Mutt Road, Mylapore, Madras 4 on 1st July 1993.*

Sri Kantha *son of Mr. & Mrs. K. Mailvaganam of Tellippalai, Sri Lanka and* **Dr. Vasantha** *daughter of the late Mr. & Mrs. V. Paramanathar of Thirunelveli, Sri Lanka in Toronto on 4.7.93.*

Thayalan *son of the late Mr. Karthigesu and Mrs. C. Karthigesu of Alaveddy, Jaffna and* **Anushya** *daughter of the late Mr. Sabanayagam and Mrs. V. Sabanayagam of 41 Chetty Street, Nallur, Jaffna on 3.7.93 at Hare Kirishna Temple, Toronto, Canada.*

Shankar *son of Dr. & Mrs. M. Ramanathan of 92 Hitchings Way, Reigate, Surrey and* **Geetha** *daughter of the late Prof. P. Thurairajan and Mrs. K. Thurairajan of 31 Frederick Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham on 10.7.93 at Rutlish School Hall, London SW19.*

OBITUARIES



Mr. Appukutty Thambirajah *(Rasa), Native Physician, beloved husband of the late Nagammah; loving father of Dr. Gunasuntharam (Streatham, London), Sivalingam (Sri Lanka), Muthulingam (Toronto, Canada), Mahalingam (Wembley, U.K.), Ratnasingam (Toronto, Canada), and Selvamalar (Mississauga, Canada); loving father-in-law of Rajini, Malar, Vicky, Vasanthi, Kala and Ganeshathasan; loving grandfather of Nimalan, Kavitha, Sivaranjini, Sivaruban, Tharijini, Theepan, Partheeban, Aarani, Samanthi, Rohan and Rahavan passed away peacefully on 26.6.93 and was cremated at Kuppilan, Jaffna. – Dr. T. Gunasuntharam, 48 Leigham Avenue, London SW16 2PZ. Tel: 081-677 5688.*

Jacob Thamotheram Thambyratnam

Born: May 20, 1920
Gone to Glory: June 7, 1993

Mr. Thambyratnam was born in a Christian family in Atchweli, Jaffna. He was brought up in a Christian atmosphere by his parents who were very dedicated Christians.

He had his early education in Jaffna **Central** *College which was a Christian school. After Matriculation he joined the Madras Christian College, where he got his B.A. degree. On his return to Sri Lanka he joined Kopay Christian College where he was a distinguished and well respected teacher. He obtained his Diploma in Education at the University of Ceylon and was appointed Vice-Principal of Union College, Tellipalai where he worked till his retirement. After retirement he spent his time in church and civic activities. He served the Lord as the secretary of C.S.I. Uduvil Church. At the request of the member of Parliament, he started the Vavunia Academy and was its Director.*

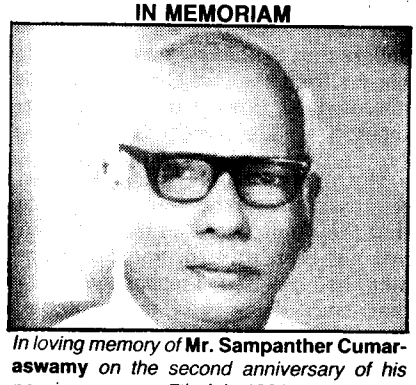
Since his children had emigrated to United States, he and his wife Mercy joined them. Even here he devoted himself to worship and following his Master in all respects. He was a model husband and father, always conscious of their happiness and needs.

He leaves behind his loving wife Mercy, daughter Emilyn Pathmajeyan (Mala), sons Jove Sathiananthan (Bubby), Joe Satkunanthan (Thevu), and Charles Premananthan (Ranjan) – Mrs. Mercy Thambyratnam, 11034 Sierra Tree, Riverside, CA 92505, USA.

Rev. Rajakumar Thurairajah, *Minister Dutch Reformed Church, Sri Lanka, beloved son of the late Mr. R.J. Thurairajah and Sountharamani (Canada), loving husband of Kirupamalar father of Tanuja, Shanika (Canada), and Rohith, much loved brother of Rajini Mahendran (New Zealand) and Ranjo Joseph (Canada) passed away in Madras hospital on 13th March 1993. Funeral services were held in Kohuwela Church where he was the Pastor and at Dutch Reformed Church, Wellawatte on the 20th of March, led by Rev. Jansz and Rev. Du Plessis of South Africa. Service of remembrance and thanksgiving were held in St. Margaret's Tamil Anglican Church, Ontario and Fairview Church of God, North York by the members of his family. – 11, Patrick Blvd., Willowdale, Ontario, Canada.*

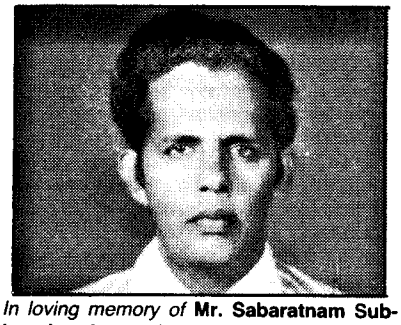
Mrs. Sowpakiam Sinnadurai *(79), beloved wife of the late S.T. Sinnadurai J.P. (Founder of Leela Press and Leela Group of Companies); everloving mother of Sundaralingam, J.P. U.M., Attorney-at-Law, the late Balendra, Attorney-at-Law, Dr. Somasegaram (Bexley, Kent), Arulanantham, J.P. (Ramsons Group of Companies), Dhesabandu (Leela Engineering Pvt Ltd.), Loganathan (Leela Press), Dhanabala J.P. (Dinorshan Trading), Sockanathan (USA), Ravindran (Leela Exports & Imports); loving mother-in-law of Gnanaluxmi, Puvaneswari, Indira Devi, Amirthambikai, Sarojini, Kirupaluxmi, Kamalaveni, Srimani and Anjana; grandmother of Mrs. Manjula Lannan, Mrs. Janaki Veerakumar, Murali, Inthiran, Rajmohan, Geetha, Priya, Subha, Shaun, Arjuna, Anujan, Anjana, Dishani, Dinesh, Pranavan, Dharshan, Dinorshan, Diluckshan, Shalini, Shivani, Hishendra and Shaileendra; great grandmother of Ashan, Avin and Ryan passed away peacefully on 25th June 1993 at 62 Bandaranaike Mawatha, Colombo 12. – 69 Wansunt Road, Bexley, Kent DA5 2DJ. Tel: 0322 525170.*

IN MEMORIAM



In loving memory of **Mr. Sampanther Cumaraswamy** *on the second anniversary of his passing away on 7th July 1991.*

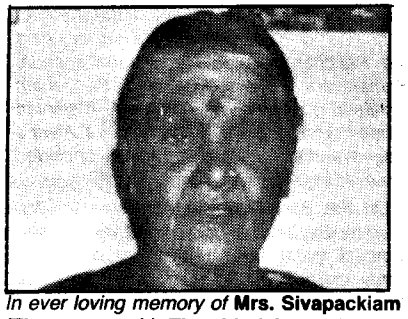
Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his wife Rasaletchumy, his children and grandchildren – 22 Calder Gardens, Edgware, Middx. HA8 5PT.



In loving memory of **Mr. Sabaratnam Subhaschandran** *of 'Anandamanai', Vathiry, Karaveddi. He passed away under tragic circumstances due to aerial bombing by Sri Lankan Air Force on 10th June 1992 at Tellipalai, near Thurkai Amman Temple. His father-in-law and mother-in-law Mr. & Mrs. R. Mahalingam and sister-in-law Miss Mathanakala Mahalingam were also killed in the same incident.*

In our hearts you will always stay
Loved and remembered everyday.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by wife Sashikala, children Vijay, Sharmillee, Nirobini and Surobini, brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews. – Dr. S. Ravindran, 1 Perton Grove, Wightwick, Wolverhampton, U.K.



In ever loving memory of **Mrs. Sivapackiam (Thanagammah) Thambirajah** *on the first anniversary of her passing away on 16th July 1992.*

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by her children Nadarajah-Naysun, Mangayatkarasi, Leelawathi, Kirupananthan, Yogarajah and Sarojini Thevy; sons-in-law Manickavasagar, Ganeshamoorthy and Perinpanathan; daughters-in-law Rajeswari, Uma and Chandravathani; grandchildren, nephews and nieces – 214 Demesne Road, Wallington, Surrey SM6 8EN. Tel: 081-395 8013.

In fond memory of **Mr. Thambapillai Ramanathan** *on the first anniversary of his passing away on 21st July 1992.*

Sadly missed and lovingly remembered by his dear wife Nirmala Yogaranee, brothers, sisters, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, nephews and nieces – 9 Osbourne Gardens, Thornton Heath, Surrey, U.K.

In loving memory of **Herbert Rasiah Kanagarajah** *on the second anniversary of his passing away to glory on 25.7.91.*

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his loving wife Mani, children Dhayanthi, Vasanthi, Mohan and Suhanthi; son-in-law Devakumar; grandchild Rebecca; and sisters Selvaranee, Amirtharanee and Thevaranee – 31 Donald Street, Blackburn South, Melbourne, Victoria 3130, Australia.

In loving memory of **Canisius Ravindran Xavier (Bobby)** *son of the late Mr. & Mrs. Paul Francis Xavier on the fourth anniversary of his passing away on 13th July 1989.*

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his loving wife Christine and children Giles, Gavin and Marian and daughter-in-law Thakschi – 150 Eswyn Road, London SW17 8TN.

In everloving memory of **Mrs. Sushila Jayaratnam** *who passed away on 14.07.91.*

You were the centre of our existence
But cruel fate snatched you away from our midst
So abruptly shrouding our world in gloom and despair

Would the void in our hearts ever go away
For this act of God remains incomprehensible still
For no one can take your place Amma.

Sorrowfully remembered by your husband Jayam; daughters Kalyani, Tharani and Sumanthini; sisters Kamala and Indira – P.O. Box 174, Gaborone, Botswana.

In loving memory of **Mrs. Mankay Sivasampu** *on the third anniversary of her passing away on 2.8.90.*

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by her two sons. – 15 Wolsey Way, Chessington, Surrey KT9 1XQ.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

July 25 *5.30pm* **Kalabhavanam** *presents Chamber Music,* **Flute Duet** *by* **Ranjith & Prayantha** *disciples of* **Rudrani Balachandran** *at 14 Willis Road, Croydon.*

July 31 *6.30pm* **Tamil Performing Arts Society** *celebrates* **its 15th Anniversary** *with* **'Ganasakaram'** *a musical extravaganza at Merton Hall, Kingston Road, London SW19.*

Aug. 2 *Full Moon.*

Aug. 6 *Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus.*

Aug. 8 *Day Tour & Picnic organised by Senior Tamils' Centre, Ontario, Canada.*

Aug. 10 *Feast of St. Lawrence.*

Aug. 14 *Ekathasi.*

Aug. 15 *Pirathosam; Feast of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary; London Sri Murugan Temple, East Ham, London E12 – Annual Chariot Festival.*

Aug. 17 *Amavasai.*

Aug. 20 *Feast of St. Bernard.*

Aug. 21 *Sathurthi.*

Aug. 24 *Feast of St. Bartholomew.*

Aug. 25 *Feast of St. Louis.*

Aug. 26 *Aavani Moolam.*

Aug. 27 *Ekathasi; Feast of St. Monica.*

Aug. 28 *Feast of St. Augustine.*

Aug. 29 *Pirathosam. 5.30pm* **Kalabhavanam** *presents Chamber Music Concert by* **Dr. Lakshmi Jayan and Aravind Jayan, Violin Duet** *at 14 Willis Road, Croydon.*

Aug. 31. J.S.S.A. Festival of Cricket *at John Billiam Grounds, Kenton, Harrow, Middx., U.K.*

At the Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 071 381 3086/4608.

Aug. 6 *7.45pm* **Santoor** *by* **Sri R. Visweswaran.**

Aug. 7 *5.30pm* **Mahabharata Lecture** *by* **Sri Mathoor Krishnamurthi** *– Concluding lecture.*

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Aug. 7 *7.00pm* **Carnatic Vocal Concert** *by* **Dr. M. Balamurali Krishna.**

Aug. 8 *6.30pm* **Carnatic Vocal Concert** *by* **Dr. M. Balamurali Krishna.**

Aug. 8 *6.30pm Bharatanatyam – Janmashtami Special by* **Chitra Visweswaran.**

Aug. 15 *6.30pm* **Indian Independence Day Celebrations** *– Speeches and Cultural Programme. All welcome.*

Bharatha Natya Arangetram

Shangitha, *seventeen-year-old daughter of* **Dr. Raj and Shanthy Rajendran,** *presented on the 24th of April, one of the most spectacular arangetrams, Melbourne has seen.*

In the tastefully decorated Nunawading Arts Centre, the audience was captivated with the performance for the full two and a half hours. Shangitha began her dance training from the tender age of six, under the expert eye of her mother and guru Shanthy Rajendran, (who is the founder of the Nrithakeshetra School of Classic Dance in Colombo in 1974 and now in Melbourne since 1980) an internationally acclaimed teacher of Bharatha Natyam. The musicians accompanying her were: Dr. Rama Rao and Sri Shanmugaraghavan on vocals, Sri Ramanatha Iyer veena, her uncle Sri R. Suthanthiraraj flute, Sri. M. Ravichandra mridangam and her mother nattuvangam.

The introductory piece was an invocation to Lord Ganesh. This was followed by a section from Sivapuranam and Pushpanjali. This was the foretaste to the nine other items which followed in quick succession. The alarripu in ganda chappu was executed with meticulous precision. Almost instantly she got into the spirit of her Rangapravesam and gave a performance remarkable for its gutso and confidence. Shangitha demonstrated her ability to take on the challenge of Shanmuga Kavutham combination of Jathi and Sahitya, depicting various sculptures of the poses of Lord Shanmuga and also in the Swarajatti, in which to the repetitive notes in a given Thala, she wove a variety of dance patterns. The Varnam the most complex and demanding item, revealed her flawless footwork and her mastery of exquisite expressions. In the first Padam, Sri Chakra Raja, Shangitha skilfully depicted the goddess Devi as represented in many temples. In the second, she portrayed with finesse and feeling, the aspirations, frustration and excited anticipation of the adoring devotee. The Keerthanam and Ashtapadi came next and was followed by the final Brindavani Thillana in which Shangitha demonstrated a variety of cross rhythmic patterns. These and the Mangalam completed the scintillating evening of entertainment which showed the dedication of this young dancer.

The British Tamil Directory

The British Directory which is under preparation is expected to be an up-to-date reference book of Tamil business, cultural and professional organisations. It will contain concise information of each Tamil organisation or enterprise, namely its name, address, telephone and fax number and a brief description of its activities and services not exceeding 25 words. A wide range of categories ranging from academic tuition to groceries and travel services to accountants exist already.

All Tamil individuals and organisations are invited to send their details along with a concise description of their services to British Tamil Directory, 180 Shrewsbury Road, Forest Gate, London E7 8QJ. Tel & Fax: 081-471 2348.

Tamil Drama Festival in London

Inspired by the Bengali stage in India, some undergraduates of Kattubedde University in the late seventies formed themselves into an avant garde theatre group under the banner Tamil Performing Arts Society which in Tamil language calls itself Tamil Avaikkattu Kalaik Kazhakam, a strange sounding title though accepted as a trade mark for the group. After emigrating to London during the early eighties some of the members of the group continued their theatrical activities and have staged so far fifty plays in and around London, a remarkable and tenacious achievement indeed. We had the pleasure of attending their 15th year celebrations and fiftieth show on 19th June last at the South Norwood Centre.

They put on board three short plays of three different sizes and format. Of them MAZHAI a play written and produced years ago by the then Delhi based writer Indira Parthasarathy (now he is Professor and head of the Department of Drama, Pondicherry University) with rain as a symbol for continuing family tormentor stood out best. Although this play is more than thirty years old, it, in the hands of Balendra and his troupe evoked spontaneous applause of the audience. The quartet Balendra, Vigneswara, Krishnaraja and Anandarani took the full stage and enacted a family drama.

Bharata Dharmam, another play of Bengali origin and Tamil version by writer Gnani of Madras, depicting an old Mahabharata episode needed some time for the audience to recall a rare incident in the story of Pancha Pandavas and the wax palace. The third play, Nammai Piditha Pisasukal (the devils that hold us) by the children of Brent Tamil School proved very attractive. Make-up and acting as well as the direction captivated the audience.

The continued devotion and perseverance of the members of the group under the stewardship of K. Balendra in maintaining a particular idiom in their productions, mainly drawing inspiration from the plays in modern European and Bengali languages, is commendable.

Sivapatha Sundaram.

Karnatic Veena & Vocal Concerts at Bhavan

The month of May ended as it had begun with splendid recitals of Karnatic music by the students of Smt. Sivasakthy Sivanesan. The programme on 1st May by her veena students showed us the immense skill and patience of her teaching by the result of two hours of joyful and devoted music.

The junior group commenced the programme and the highlights in this section were a Khamas Svarajati and a Jatisvaram in Hamsadhvani both set to Adi tala. The intermediate group played the fascinating Ganesa Pancharatnam to words attributed to Adi Sankara. Its regular rhythmic melody was delightfully rendered by this group. It was the turn of the seniors for the rest of the evening. A number of Kirtanas were played including the Pancharatnam in Nata, Jagadananda, Samajavara in Hindolam and Paridanam icchite in Bilahari all by Tyagaraja. A spirited rendering of Pattnam Subrahmanya Aiyar's Raghuvamsasudha and a Tillana concluded the evening.

On the 31st May a programme entitled 'Geetha Layam' was presented by her students of vocal music. Three groups of students performed and there were two solo items. Sixteen students comprised the junior group and spiritedly sang a Malhari Gitam, a Svarajati in Bilahari and a Khamas Jatisvaram. Largest was the intermediate group – twentythree students. They gave excellent renderings of Gajavadana in Sriranlani, Devi niye in Kirvani and Govardhana in Hindolam – a tarangam by Narayanatirtha. There followed two solo items by two extremely gifted pupils: Ravi Ramdas and Sathyarthi Chandrasekaran. Highlight of the evening was Parvati nayakane in Shanmukhapriye, to Adi tala. This commenced with a brilliant alapana duo by Sivasaktyji and her talented pupil Ravi which captivated the other students and audience alike. It was beautifully supported by Sri Chandrasekhar on violin with his wonderful cadenza-style playing.

The programmes demonstrated the high level of dedicated professionalism by the participants and amply showed the wealth of music now available in London at Bhavan's UK centre. Smt. Sivasakthy Sivanesan is to be congratulated on establishing such a wealth of tradition in Karnatic music in this country.

John R. Marr.

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New Station for Voice of America

The infrastructure work for a new Voice of America (VOA) station at Iranawila in the Chilaw-Natandiya district has already commenced according to USIS Director William H. Maurer Jr. He said that workers were engaged in improving water supply, electricity and roads in the area before the construction of the VOA station began probably within the next three months.

The Sri Lankan government has leased some 413 acres of land to the US for the building of the station and associated facilities. The Americans will be spending some $60 million for the construction of the station of which $25 million will be spent in connection with local construction costs.

After the new VOA station becomes operational, there will be no more than seven American civilians employed at the site, and there will not be any military personnel stationed at Iranawila or elsewhere in the country to support the station.

The new station is scheduled to become operational in late 1995. The agreement between the government of Sri Lanka and the United States to improve and expand the already existing VOA facilities was signed in January 1985 by the then US envoy in Colombo, John H. Reed and the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation Chairman, Livy Wijemanne. But the construction of the new station did not take place even after the groundbreaking ceremony was held. The delay is attributed to the pressure applied by the Indian government upon Sri Lanka to the awarding of the new facilities to the VOA.

Continued from page 9

leader said: 'It is ridiculous that the government should be dictated to in such matters by the army and the Buddhist clergy.'

There were, however, other vested interests as well, in the army and some ruling party circles, which were working overtime to scuttle the decision to ease the embargo on the north. These interests were of course motivated by the sheer desire for profit. The embargo has over the years created vast avenues for corruption and hence for 'minting millions' for those in whose power it was to issue permits, arrange military clearance for unauthorised transport of certain items etc. A UNP politico based in Vavuniya is reported to be charging one hundred thousand rupees for a permit to transport kerosine to the north. Although several army men including some senior officers have been found guilty of embargo related corruption, the business goes on unabated. The profits are so enormous that the prospect of punishment can do little to deter those soldiers who have an entrepreneurial bent.

The day before the POW deal fell through, the new national security adviser to President D.B. Wijetunge, Gen. Sepala Attygalle gave a clear indication of the government's approach to the problem when he told the state run Daily News, 'But of course he (Brig. Weerasekera) will be bringing back messages from the LTTE which would give the government some sort of direction towards the future settlement of a problem that has become a national issue – I repeat, a national issue – which must be approached with dedication and caution.' The General also did not fail to emphasise that the national media should play a 'responsible' role in this. The state run Daily News made this its headline that day.

Next morning everything was back to square one. The Tamils were jerked back into grim reality by the triumphant clamour of Sinhala-Buddhist militarism, which not only dashed hopes for peace on the eve of July 1993, but has dangerously still, cowed civilian authority in the South into helpless submission.

Continued from page 21

the logic that anything used for the sustenance of life of Tigers (chocolates, confectionery, milk-foods, white paper, white cloth etc.), should be prohibited, a whole generation of babies are born half weight (four pounds!). The older generation that need medicine and more milk-foods is dying earlier and faster. The many generations of youth without electricity, kerosene, exercise books, white uniforms etc., are deprived of normal education. The whole population plunged into years of darkness (hardly any lamp lit with kerosene at Rs. 150/ a bottle), without communication (without radios and TVs, without post and telecommunications) is quickly losing its sight and even vision.

The cumulative effect of all these, plus the fact that the government is only dragging its feet too slowly (Select Committee Proposals), towards any political solution (conditioned by the chances of foreign aid etc), point clearly to **a slow but sure genocide for Tamils in the North!** In fact, the new President soon after taking office has denied even the existence of a Tamil problem and admitted only the existence of Tamil terrorism!

If this project of strangulating a whole peninsula by making it a slow-death chamber, succeeds, Sri Lanka would have clearly outdone Hitler and his holocaust!

Continued from page 19

request. A well-known journalist attached to the editorial board of a Madras-based leading national daily newspaper through whose efforts the meeting was arranged was also present at the meeting that took place on March 1991, some ten weeks before the assassination. At this meeting, Mr. Gandhi was informed that the LTTE did not harbour any ill-feeling or grudge against him; that as far as the LTTE was concerned the IPKF-LTTE confrontation and what happened during that period was unfortunate and could be regarded as a forgotten chapter; and that the LTTE and its leader wanted to re-establish friendly relations with Mr. Gandhi and his party. Mr. Gandhi in response had reportedly said that for any meaningful re-establishment of good relations with the LTTE, the Tigers should issue a public statement under the signature of its leader Mr. V. Prabhakaran acknowledging two matters: firstly that a meeting between them and Mr. Gandhi had taken place at the request of the LTTE leader, and secondly that the LTTE would be prepared to accept the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 1987 as the basis for a future settlement of the ethnic conflict. Mr. Gandhi also wanted Kasi Anandan to ascertain from Prabhakaran what his 'outlook and real goal' was in the struggle. However, the LTTE issued no such statement, nor was there any response from the LTTE leader, and the meeting between Mr. Kasi Anandan and Mr. Gandhi remained a secret until after the assassination.

Past Copies of Tamil Times

Past copies of Tamil Times are available for sale in 11 volumes, the present series being volume 12. The price of each volume is £20 by surface mail. Those interested are requested to send a cheque/draft/money order for £20 for each volume to:

The Circulation Manager, Tamil Times Ltd., P.O. Box 121, Sutton, SM1 3TD, U.K. *The price for each volume in other currencies is: US$40/Can$47/Aus$54.*

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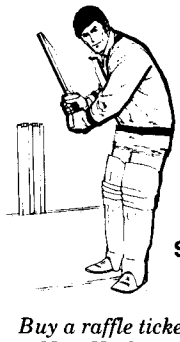

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